

ZOIS

Zentrum für Osteuropa-
und internationale Studien
*Centre for East European
and International Studies*

No. 1/2018 · June 2018

ZOIS REPORT

**YOUTH IN RUSSIA:
OUTLOOK ON LIFE AND
POLITICAL ATTITUDES**

Félix Krawatzek and Gwendolyn Sasse

Content

02	Executive summary
04	Introduction
05	Youth and politics: interest but limited knowledge
08	Political engagement: presidential elections, protests, youth organizations
08	Presidential elections 2018
09	Protests: awareness but little involvement
10	Youth organizations
11	Expectations and trust
14	Russia and the world
15	Values
16	Conclusion
17	Imprint

Executive summary

Russian youth remains a group that is not sufficiently understood in current analyses of Russian politics and society. It is a part of society that has been very visible in recent political protests across the country, but there is also evidence that the younger generation is either disengaged from politics, or conservative and loyal to President Putin. The ZOiS survey among youth across fifteen regional capitals in the Russian Federation (April 2018) provides insights into these seemingly contradictory trends. The main survey findings are:

- Russian youth reports being interested in politics – both in domestic politics and foreign policy – but their factual political knowledge is limited.
- Internet sources, in particular social media, and Russian television are the most important sources of information about politics for the young (each chosen by about 30 per cent).
- 61 per cent of the respondents reported taking part in the presidential elections, of whom 67 per cent said they voted for Vladimir Putin. These figures are slightly lower than the official figures for turnout and vote choice.
- The respondents report a high level of trust in Russian president Vladimir Putin, in the Russian army, and in voluntary organizations. Trust in local and regional institutions is significantly lower. Trust and distrust in the Russian Orthodox Church are more evenly split. In the case of the Russian mass media distrust outweighs trust.

- There is widespread awareness of recent protests that have taken place across Russia. However, only the minority of respondents reports having taken part in – mostly local – social, political or environmental protests (about 5 per cent for each type of protest). Differentiating further within this cohort of the young, higher age decreases the likelihood of being aware of or participating in protests. Higher material well-being correlates with awareness of protests.
- The respondents' main expectations vis-à-vis the government are higher living standards (56 per cent), and anti-corruption reforms (14 per cent). When asked about their second most important expectation, anti-corruption reforms top the list (24 per cent), followed by higher living standards (20 per cent).
- Political awareness and first-hand travel experience are spread evenly between Western countries and China/Asia. About a third of the respondents have travelled outside of Russia over the last year, mostly for tourism. Of those, more than half travelled to EU countries and about a third to countries of the Former Soviet Union. Only slightly fewer – 29 per cent – have travelled to Asia beyond the Former Soviet Union, but only about 6 per cent to the US.
- China and the US are singled out as the top two countries Russia should have the closest relations with, chosen by 28 and 19 per cent of the respondents respectively. The third most frequently mentioned country is Ukraine (9 per cent). Among EU countries, Germany is chosen most often (by 7 per cent).
- Labour mobility is low: nearly 90 per cent have not worked or lived elsewhere in Russia over the last year, and only just below 3 per cent have lived or worked in an EU country or a country belonging to the Former Soviet Union.
- However, 54 per cent of the respondents are thinking about leaving their current place of residence: of those, almost 50 per cent would consider moving within Russia, while 21 per cent are interested in moving to an EU country and 7 per cent to the US. A lower self-reported level of household wellbeing correlates with thinking about migration.
- Russian youth expresses support for the idea that everyone in society should share a knowledge of Russian history and identify with Russian culture. An active role of the state in this regard meets with approval. At the same time, more than 80 per cent of the respondents agree that all citizens should have equal opportunities based on the principle of non-discrimination. There is little support for the multicultural idea of preserving the distinct cultures of migrant communities and state policy on the integration of immigrants into the workforce is not a priority.

Introduction¹

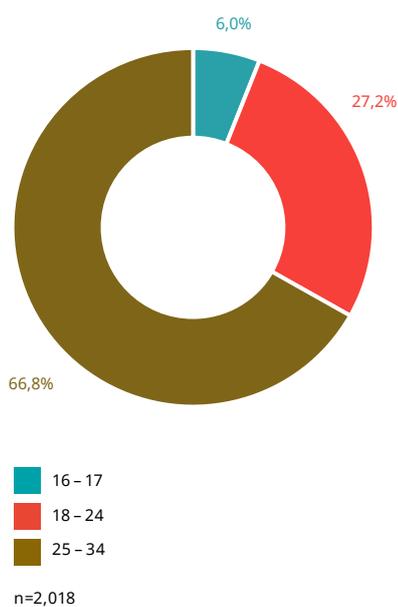
The image of young people in Russia portrayed by Russian and Western media is highly ambivalent: on the one hand, young people have been prominent in the recent waves of protest across different parts of the Russian Federation, in particular in the anti-corruption and anti-Putin protest movement around Alexander Navalny. On the other hand, youth has repeatedly shown up in survey research as one of the most conservative and regime-loyal segments of society. In between, there is bound to be a group of disaffected youth. Youth is simultaneously stabilizing and challenging the current political regime in Russia, but what is the balance between those two poles? In order to answer these questions, we need to refine our understanding of the attitudes, aspirations, behaviour and social contexts of the younger generation in Russia.

On the one hand, youth attitudes provide insights into the expectations for which politicians have to offer a more long-term perspective. On the other hand, the younger generation is an important test group for assessing the Russian regime's success in shaping the population's opinions. The extent to which youth has been at the centre of the political attention in Russia is striking. A number of official youth organizations were set up in the aftermath of the Ukrainian Orange Revolution in 2004. By learning from the role of youth in a sequence of colour revolutions in Eastern Europe, organizations such as **Nashi** and **Rossiia Molodaya** were created to proactively counter this trend and mobilize and manage youth in an attempt to protect the country from internal and external threats to stability. Over time, the official strategy has changed: the high visibility of public displays of regime support based on a top-down organizational network since the immediate aftermath of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine has been replaced by more long-term measures to train youth as the carrier of the conservative social and political values propagated by the regime. The reform of the school curriculum has gained in importance, with a particular emphasis on the teaching of history.

ZOiS conducted an online survey among young(er) people aged 16–34 in fifteen regional capitals of the Russian Federation² in the immediate aftermath of the re-election of Vladimir Putin as President on 18 March 2018. The format of an online survey was chosen, as it fits the communication practices of the younger generation, gives respondents control over the whole process and conveys a sense of greater anonymity than face-to-face interviews, something that is likely to be important in a politically restrictive setting.

The survey was carried out between 2 and 9 April 2018 among a total of 2,018 respondents (with more respondents concentrated in the mid-to-upper end of the age spectrum owing to difficulties in recruiting the youngest eligible respondents). ► **FIGURE 1** Overall, the surveyed age categories account for about 40 million people out of a total population of the Russian

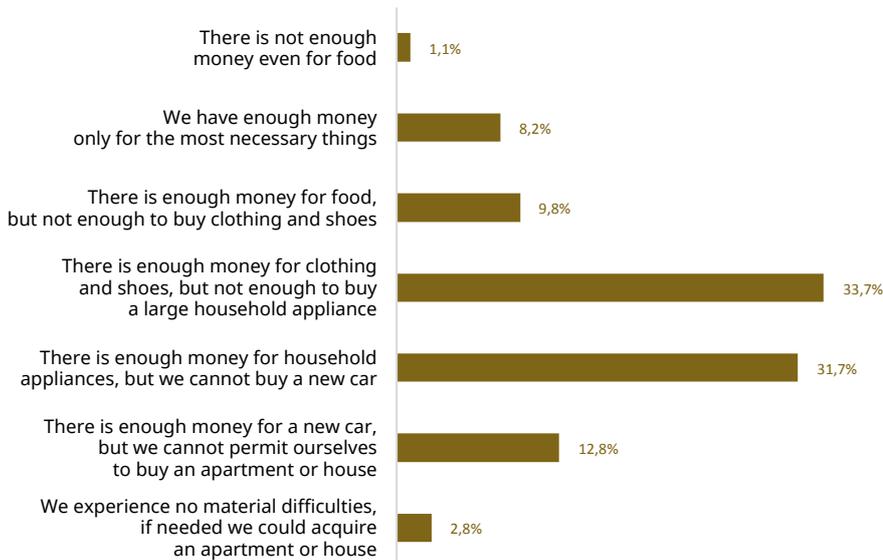
FIGURE 1
Age category



Source: Centre for East European and International Studies

1 The authors gratefully acknowledge the research assistance provided by Alice Lackner.
2 The following cities were included: Moscow, St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Ekaterinburg, Kazan, Krasnoyarsk, Nizhnyi Novgorod, Chelyabinsk, Omsk, Rostov-on-Don, Ufa, Samara, Voronezh, Perm, Volgograd.

FIGURE 2
Self-reported household wealth



n=1,999

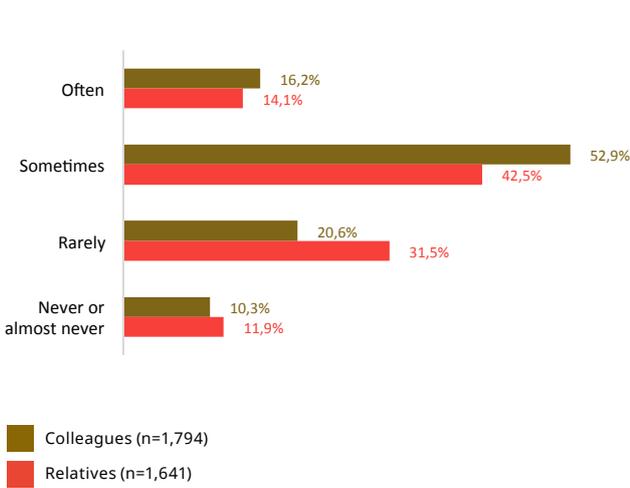
Source: Centre for East European and International Studies

Federation of about 144 million (World Bank 2016; <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=RU>). All the ZOiS survey respondents live in urban areas. In terms of socio-economic profile, about a third described their household as having enough resources for clothing but not for larger household appliances; another third chose the next higher category of self-reported wealth where the available resources suffice for household appliances but not for a car. ► **FIGURE 2** In line with the quota sample (age, gender, location), there is an almost even split in terms of gender (49 per cent men, 51 per cent women), and about 41 per cent of respondents live with their spouses, while about a quarter reported living with their parents, and only 9 per cent live by themselves.

Youth and politics: interest but limited knowledge

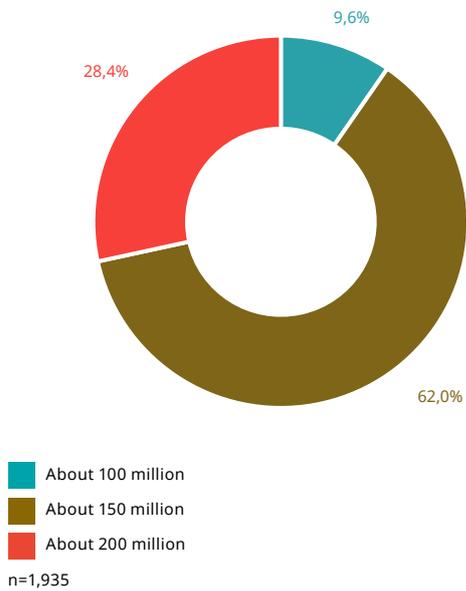
Our survey shows that young people take an interest in the political affairs of their country. Fifty-five per cent of the respondents stated that they were interested in politics, with about two thirds of these respondents expressing an equal interest in domestic and foreign policy issues. Discussions about politics happen somewhat more frequently among colleagues and friends (60 per cent said these discussions take place 'often' or 'sometimes') than with relatives (50 per cent said these discussions take place 'often' or 'sometimes'). Disagreements are more common in the conversations with colleagues (69 per cent disagree 'often' or 'sometimes') than among relatives (56 per cent disagree 'often' or 'sometimes'), suggesting that political debate is a semi-public matter rather than a private one. Less than 10 per cent

FIGURE 3
When you discuss politics, how often do you disagree?



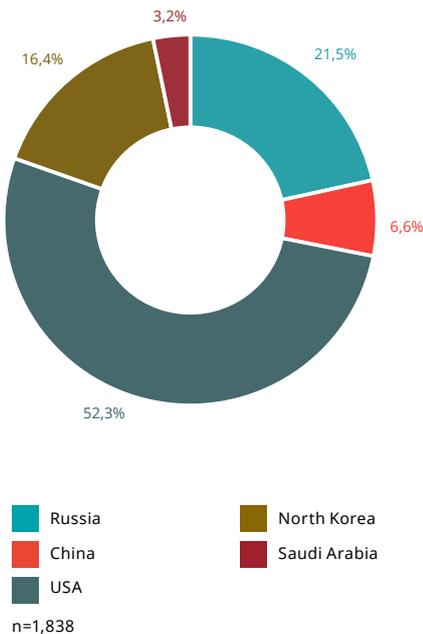
Source: Centre for East European and International Studies

FIGURE 4
What is the the population size of Russia?



Source: Centre for East European and International Studies

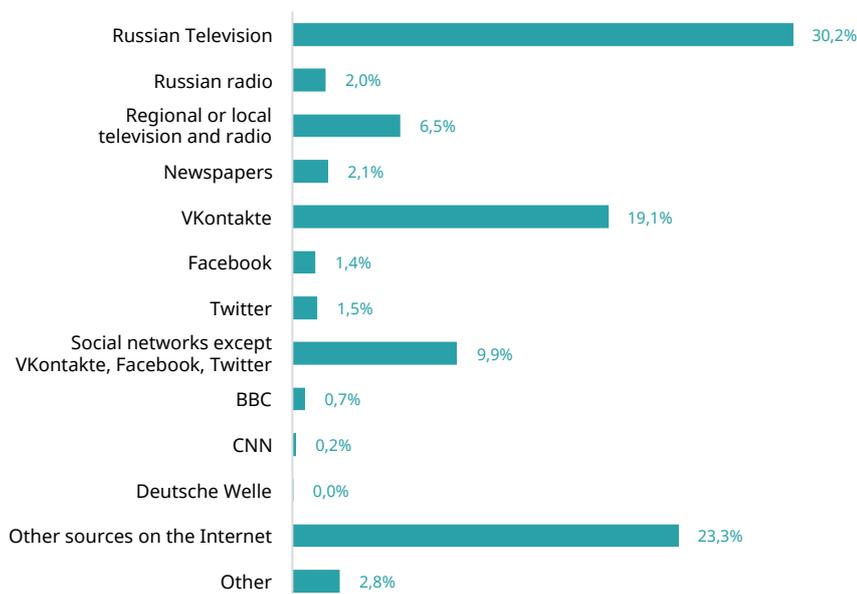
FIGURE 5
Which country has the highest military expenditure?



Source: Centre for East European and International Studies

of the respondents reported that they have ‘unfriended’ a contact on social media because of political disputes, thereby indicating a limited degree of political controversy in online networks. ► **FIGURE 3**

The general declaration of political interest is accompanied by a self-reported lack of knowledge about Russia’s history and limited factual knowledge about politics. More than half of the respondents said that they do not know enough about the history of their country. The survey included a quiz about domestic and international affairs. Respondents were asked to identify Western, post-Soviet and Asian political leaders and answer factual multiple-choice questions about the size of the population of Russia, the number of EU member states or the country with the highest military spending. Only 2 per cent of the respondents achieved a full score in this test, with the majority getting about half of the questions right. Almost all respondents correctly identified the political leaders of countries such as the US, China, Germany and the UK. However, more than half failed to recognize the current President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko. Given the amount of Russian media coverage of Ukraine since the Euromaidan, the annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine, this lack of visual recognition is surprising. Given a choice of 100, 150 and 200 million as the size of the population of the Russian Federation, more than 60 per cent gave the correct answer, while 28 per cent inflated the population size to 200 million. Asked about the number of EU member states, only 22 per cent could give the correct answer out of a choice of four answers. Asked about the country with the highest total military spending, about half of the respondents gave the correct answer (USA), 22 per cent picked Russia and 16 per cent North Korea. ► **FIGURES 4 + 5**

FIGURE 6**Main source of information (first choice)**

n=2,001

Source: Centre for East European and International Studies

Russian youth primarily accesses political news through social media outlets, in particular through the Russian equivalent of Facebook called VKontakte (19 per cent), via Twitter or Facebook (1.5 and 1.4 per cent respectively) and other, unspecified social media (10 per cent). In total, about 30 per cent of the younger generation receive most of their information about politics through social media. Additionally, 23 per cent of the respondents said that other internet sources are their main sources of information. By comparison, 30 per cent rely on Russian television to inform themselves about politics. All of the major TV channels are state-controlled by now. Our respondents mostly watch the state-owned Channel 1, Russia 1, and Gazprom controlled NTV. ► **FIGURE 6**

The print media retain greater diversity in terms of political views, but they do not play a significant role for Russian youth: only 2 per cent report turning to newspapers as their first and 4.5 per cent as their second most important source of information. There is, of course, a grey area, as the category 'other internet sources' might include online editions of newspapers and articles shared via social media. When asked about their second most important source of information, 19 per cent point to Russian television, followed by a total of about 35 per cent using social media (20 per cent use VKontakte, 1.5 per cent Facebook, 1.5 per cent Twitter, and 12 per cent other social media sites). As the second most important source regional media outlets (especially regional and local TV and radio used by just under 14 per cent of respondents) play a somewhat bigger role, underlining their complementary role. Traditional Western media outlets like BBC and CNN have negligible regular audiences.

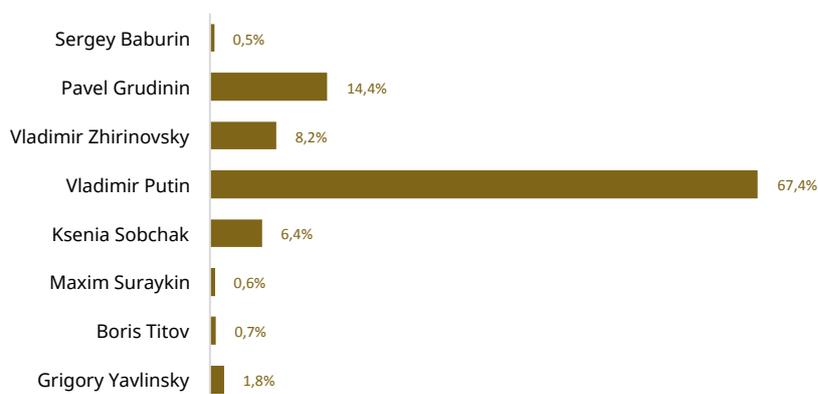
Political engagement: presidential elections, protests, youth organizations

Presidential elections 2018

Sixty-one per cent of the respondents confirmed that they voted in the presidential elections in March 2018. Of the 39 per cent who said that they had not participated, about a third explained their choice with the feeling that their vote would not have made a difference, 16 per cent interpreted their abstention as a way to show their disapproval of the political system, and just under 11 per cent reported not identifying with the political views of any of the candidates. The umbrella category ‘other reasons’ contains reasons, such as having been ill on the day, other logistical reasons, or having forgotten about the elections. Actual vote choice is a question that respondents may have felt less comfortable to answer despite the fact that an online survey offers a higher degree of anonymity and that they could choose not to answer. Sixty-seven per cent of the respondents who chose to answer the question about vote choice said that they had voted for Vladimir Putin. These numbers are somewhat lower than the overall official election result of 77 per cent and the official turnout figure of 67.5 per cent. From the additional survey question of how many of the respondents’ five closest friends voted in the elections, turnout would have been closer to 55 per cent. These are, of course, no definite numbers, but the responses reflect a higher degree of abstention or election fatigue among Russian youth compared to other age groups.

The vote shares for the other candidates also diverge from the officially declared results for the overall electorate, indicating somewhat higher support levels for a range of candidates associated with left-wing, liberal and right-wing political views: 14.4 per cent of the survey respondents reported having voted for the communist candidate Pavel Grudin (official result for the overall electorate: 11.8 per cent), 6.4 per cent for Ksenia Sobchak (official result: 1.7 per cent), 8.1 per cent for Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (official result: 5.7 per cent) and 1.8 per cent for Grigoriy Yavlinsky (official result: 1.1 per cent). ► **FIGURE 7**

FIGURE 7
Vote choice in presidential elections 2018



n= 965

Source: Centre for East European and International Studies

Ahead of the presidential elections, the political regime had made a concerted effort to increase voter turnout as a key indicator of support for the current political regime. Some of these initiatives were aimed at young people specifically, such as the competition ‘If I were President . . .’ which encouraged students to submit an essay, a drawing, a video or a project outline about what they would do if they were the country’s next leader. Over half of the survey respondents stated they had not heard of any of these initiatives. The only ones that triggered a recognition effect among a sizeable proportion of the respondents were the ‘Photo at the Polls’ (**Foto na vyborakh**) and ‘Together to the Polls’ (**Vmeste na vybory**). ‘Photo at the polls’ asked voters to take a selfie at a polling station and to post it on a social media outlet under a hashtag in return for being entered into a draw for electronic devices. The explicit goal of this initiative was to mobilize voters aged 18–39 and to create a positive atmosphere around the election. ‘Photo at the Polls’ was known to almost a quarter of our respondents but used by merely 2 per cent. The initiative ‘Together to the polls’ worked through a dating app inviting others to join them on election day. Eighteen per cent of the respondents had come across it, but again only about 2 per cent of them reported using it. Overall, the voter mobilization initiatives clearly did not appeal to young Russians.

Protests: awareness but little involvement

Just below 60 per cent of respondents said that they are aware of protests that took place across the Russian Federation during the last twelve months. A follow-up question that asked what these protests were about showed that respondents knew about protests against the current authorities, including Putin specifically, about corruption in general, or about the upcoming elections. However, only around four to five per cent said that they had participated in social and political or environmental protests, mostly at the local level, over the last year, and about 17 per cent reported knowing people who had taken part. ► **FIGURES 8+9** Beyond the fact that respondents based in Moscow and St. Petersburg are more likely to have heard about or to have

FIGURE 8
Awareness of protests

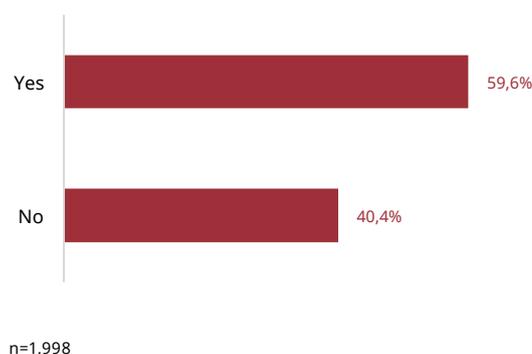
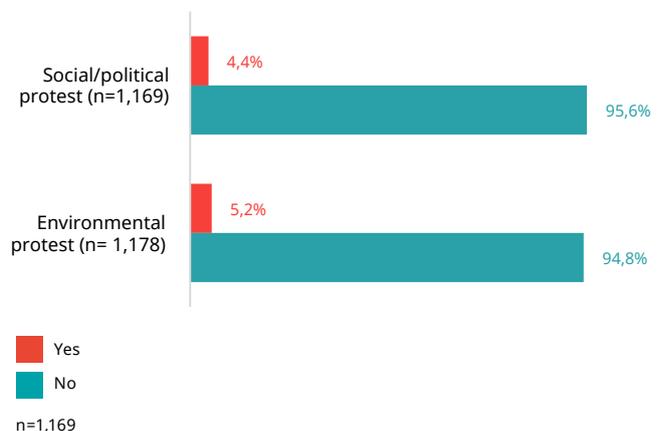


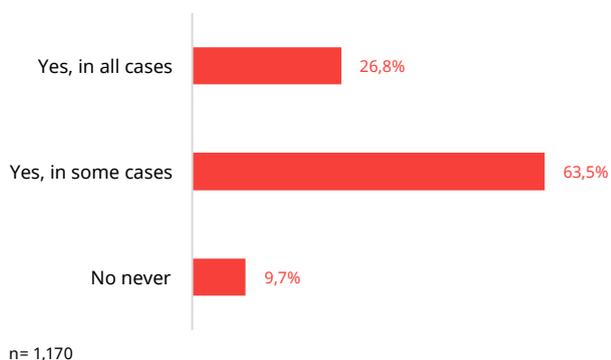
FIGURE 9
Participation in protests



Source: Centre for East European and International Studies

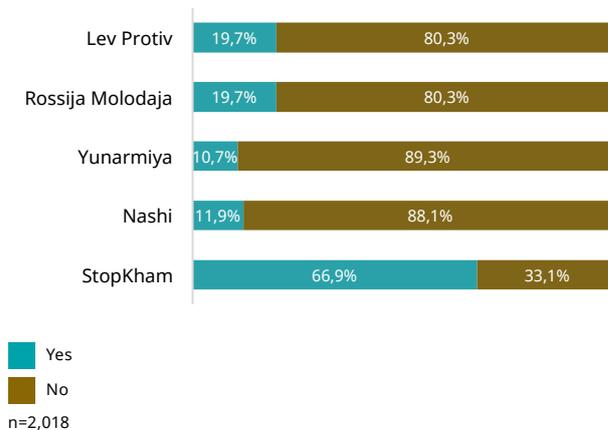
Source: Centre for East European and International Studies

FIGURE 10
Do you consider protests a legitimate form of action?



Source: Centre for East European and International Studies

FIGURE 11
Do you know the following youth organizations?



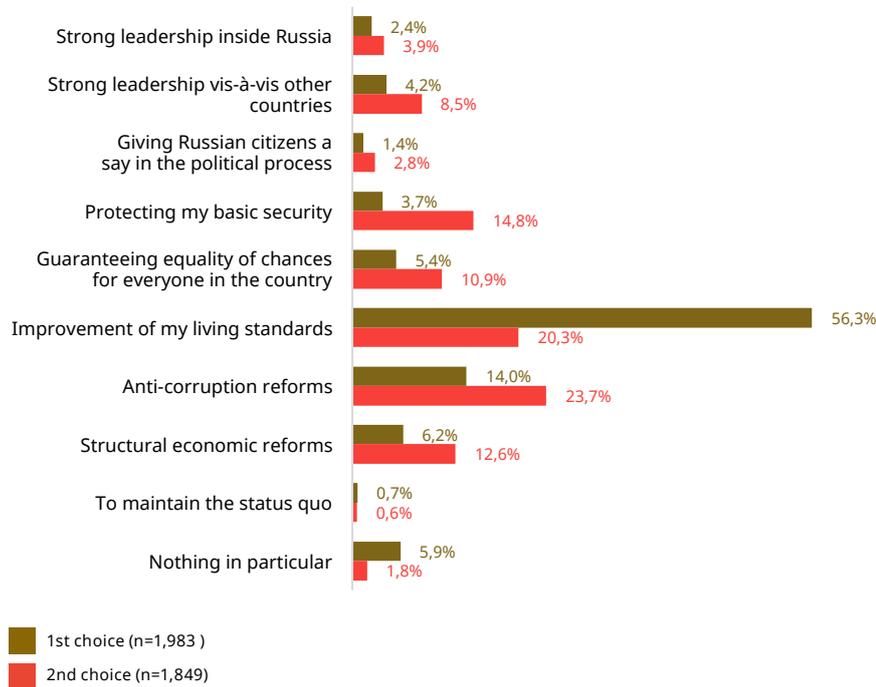
Source: Centre for East European and International Studies

participated in protests, there is regional variation. Awareness of protests was lowest in Voronezh, Volgograd and Krasnoyarsk, but higher in Samara and Ufa, thereby suggesting that distance from Moscow is not the main determinant of these trends. Those who participated in protests or knew of people who did are statistically more likely to have voiced the expectation that the government ought to fight corruption or give its citizens a say in the political process (see below). Despite low participation levels, Russian youth clearly considers protest to be a legitimate form of political engagement: 27 per cent stated their unconditional support for protest activity as a legitimate form of political action, and 64 per cent considered it legitimate ‘in some cases’, with only just below 10 per cent denying the legitimacy of protests in general. ► **FIGURE 10**

Youth organizations

Although about 73 per cent of the respondents stated that young people should make their voices heard through youth organizations, only slightly above four per cent have actually been members of such an organization. Existing youth organizations are by and large unknown to the vast majority of the survey respondents, underlining both the reorientation of the regime’s efforts away from an earlier focus on institutionalization and the inability to appeal to the younger generation at large in this way. Even when asked about the most prominent youth organizations – **Nashi** and **Rossiya Molodaya** – only 12 and 20 per cent respectively said that they had heard about them. A clear exception is the movement **StopKham** which is known to 67 per cent of the respondents. It is famous for its actions of public shaming and harassment aimed at bringing more order onto Russia’s streets, for instance by placing large stickers on cars that are parked in the wrong place. The group has a lively online presence (YouTube and VKontakte). **Lev Protiv**, a government-initiated movement that tries to impose social norms like non-smoking in public, is the second most-known organization recognized by nearly 20 per cent of the respondents. ► **FIGURE 11**

FIGURE 12
What do you expect from those in government?



Source: Centre for East European and International Studies

Expectations and trust

When asked about what they expect from those in government, the first choice from a list of options provided were better living standards (chosen by 56 per cent). All other options played a comparatively small role in the perceptions of the respondents – anti-corruption reforms emerged as the second most important expectation (chosen by 14 per cent). The picture becomes more complex when the respondents were asked about their second most important expectation. Here the fight against corruption came out top (24 per cent), followed by improved living conditions (20 per cent) and between 10 and 15 per cent of the respondents choosing basic social security, structural economic reforms and equal opportunities in life. ► **FIGURE 12** The main expectations and hopes are thus centred on personal issues and illustrate the need for domestic policy to address these concerns. Only four and nine per cent respectively chose strong Russian leadership vis-à-vis other countries as their first or second most important expectation, thereby indicating a clear primacy of domestic over foreign policy concerns. Democratic aspirations do not feature prominently on the younger generation’s horizon. Only a tiny minority asked for their government to increase citizen participation in the political process (between 1 and 3 per cent respectively indicated this as their first or second choice). There is a significant correlation between having lived or worked in an EU country and this expectation.

The ZOIS survey also asked respondents how much they trust a variety of political actors and institutions. The Russian president and the Russian army enjoy the highest levels of trust (about 30 and 27 per cent respectively ‘fully

trust' these two institutions). How genuine these responses are is impossible to say, but again the greater anonymity of an online-survey and the option not to answer this question caution us against disregarding them outright. Overall, about 70 per cent of the respondents 'fully' or 'rather' trust the president and the army. Moreover, about a third of the respondents indicated that they do not trust the president and the army (incl. 'do not trust at all' or 'rather do not trust'). Rather different organizations follow in third and fourth place on the trust scale: Russian voluntary organizations are 'rather' trusted by 56 per cent and 'fully' trusted by 15 per cent of the respondents – compared to 48 per cent and 18 per cent respectively 'rather' or 'fully' trusting the Russian security forces. In the case of the local authorities and regional governors, distrust clearly outweighs trust: over 60 per cent rather or completely distrust these institutions. This trend seems to reflect both a more direct encounter with local or regional problems and the central government's attempts to hold sub-national authorities responsible for socio-economic and political shortcomings. ► FIGURES 13 + 14

FIGURE 13
To what extent do you trust the Russian president?

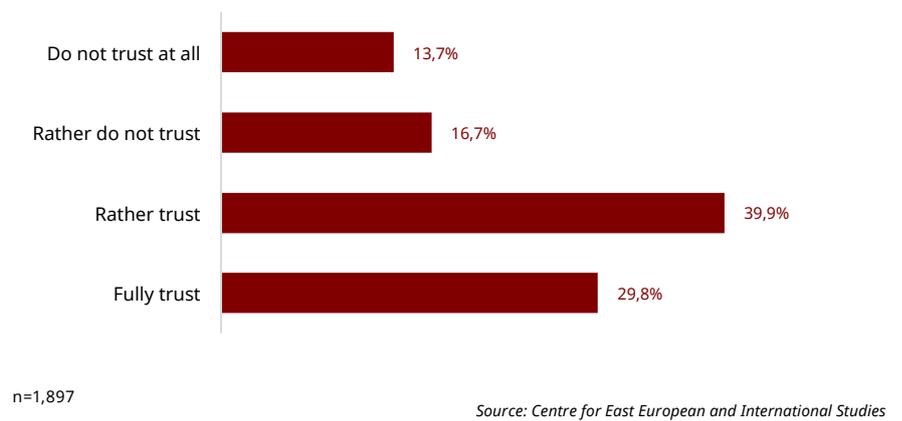
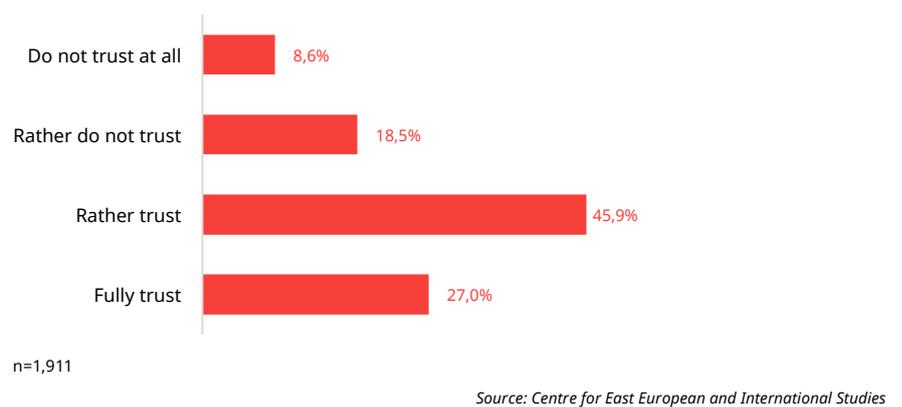


FIGURE 14
To what extent do you trust the Russian army?

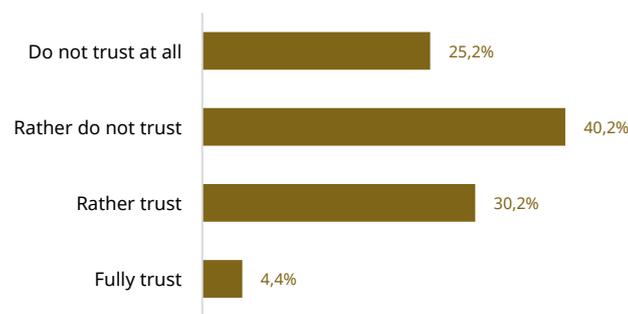


In the case of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian mass media, Russian youth is most critical, and the reported trust levels diverge significantly. On the one hand, the Russian Orthodox Church is the least trusted institution of those included in the survey: a third of the respondents indicated that they do not trust it at all. If one combines this category with those who replied that they ‘rather do not trust’ it, overall distrust stands at about 57 per cent. But views remain divided, with 43 per cent expressing trust in the Russian Orthodox Church (of whom just under 13 per cent ‘fully trust’ it). Sixty-four per cent of the young people in the survey named Russian Orthodoxy as their religion, compared to close to 30 per cent stating that they do not have a religious affiliation. Overall, distrust in the Russian media stands at 65 per cent (including 25 per cent of the respondents having no trust in them at all), compared to just below 35 per cent of the respondents reporting a degree of trust (of these only about 4 per cent ‘fully’ trust them).

► FIGURES 15 + 16

According to nearly half of the respondents, the situation for the average Russian has deteriorated in recent years. Just over a quarter indicated that they thought the situation had improved, and another quarter thought that nothing had changed. The question about whether the country is headed in the wrong or the right direction further conveys this split, with half of the respondents stating that the country is headed in the right direction. The Levada Center, an independent polling institution in Russia, asks the same question every month, and in April 2018, 60 per cent of the population at large thought the country was headed in the right direction. This figure has hardly fluctuated since March 2014 (<https://www.levada.ru/indikatory/polozhenie-del-v-strane/>). Thus, the younger generation expresses somewhat greater overall scepticism compared to the average respondent in a nationally representative sample.

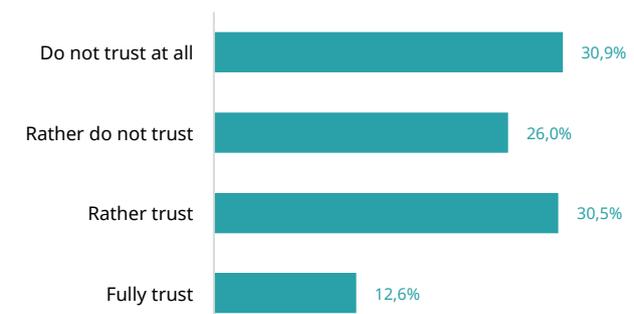
FIGURE 15
To what extent do you trust the mass media in Russia?



n= 1,907

Source: Centre for East European and International Studies

FIGURE 16
To what extent do you trust the Russian Orthodox Church?



n=1,859

Source: Centre for East European and International Studies

Russia and the world

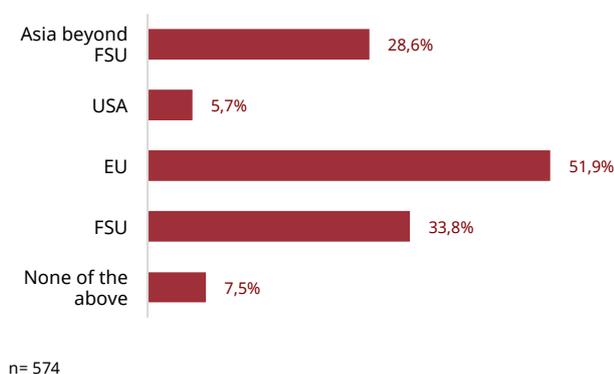
Asked about the one country that Russia should seek closer ties with, the most frequently mentioned countries were China (28 per cent) and the US (19 per cent), followed by Ukraine (9 per cent). Germany was the EU country singled out most often (by 7 per cent). Thus, Russian youth looks simultaneously east and west.

Just under a third of the respondents have travelled beyond Russia over the last year. Of those, more than half travelled to EU countries and about a third to countries of the Former Soviet Union. Only slightly fewer – 29 per cent – have travelled to Asia beyond the Former Soviet Union, but only about 6 per cent have been to the US. ► **FIGURE 17** Overall, tourism was by far the predominant motivation for travel (for 75 per cent), followed by just under 12 per cent visiting family and 8 per cent travelling for job purposes.

Labour mobility among the younger generation is low: nearly 90 per cent have not worked or lived elsewhere in Russia over the last year, and only just below 3 per cent have lived or worked in an EU country or a country belonging to the Former Soviet Union. ► **FIGURE 18** Travel experiences and contacts to family members and friends based elsewhere provide Russian youth with direct links beyond their place of residence. Sixty-two per cent of the survey respondents have travelled to other cities and regions inside the Russian Federation over the last year, and 39 per cent stated that they have family members or friends living elsewhere in Russia. By comparison, just below 20 per cent report that family members or friends live in another post-Soviet country, also just below 20 per cent live in an EU country, just under 12 per cent in the US, and 5 per cent in Asia.

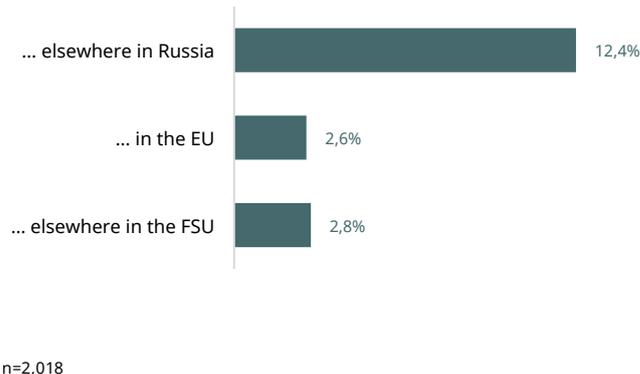
A majority of survey respondents (54 per cent) is thinking about leaving their current place of residence. Almost half of them would consider moving to a different part of Russia, and 21 per cent said that they were

FIGURE 17
Foreign travel experience during the last year



Source: Centre for East European and International Studies

FIGURE 18
Have you lived or worked ...



Source: Centre for East European and International Studies

interested in moving to a European Union country and 7 per cent to the US. The economic situation is mentioned as the most important driver behind these considerations, though political reasons are relevant too. Those who report higher household well-being are significantly less likely to answer that they consider leaving.

Values

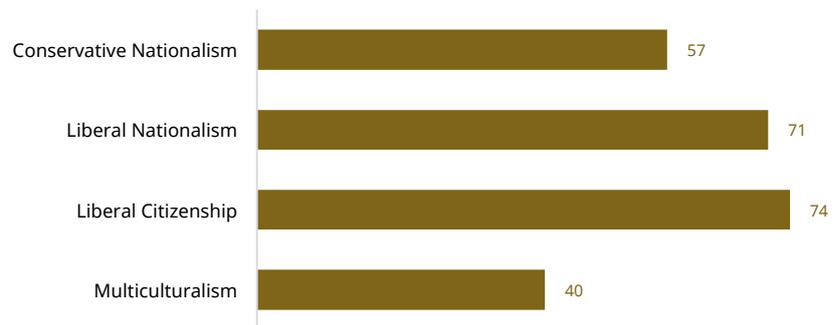
The ZOIS Survey includes a range of questions tapping into the political and social values of young people. A clear majority of respondents believe that their own values are shared by others living in Russia (59 per cent and 27 per cent think that this holds ‘to some degree’ and ‘to a high degree’ respectively). Thus, Russian youth thinks of itself as being a fairly cohesive group which is not that different from the rest of the population.

An overall majority of respondents agreed with the statement that all citizens should enjoy the same opportunities in life, regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and social background (49 per cent of the respondents ‘fully agree’ and 34 per cent ‘rather agree’). Asked whether the state should increase its efforts to look after the poorest in society, even if that meant increasing taxes, 60 per cent said that they approve of slightly more redistribution. Another 18 per cent even support the statement that significant redistribution is needed.

The survey explores different sets of values by gauging the respondents’ commitment to four ways of imagining their political and social community and the rights individuals should have therein. First, a **conservative national** understanding of identity suggests that social cohesion depends on a shared national culture (the related statements, for example, emphasized that everyone should follow the same traditions, and that Russian national history and culture should be at the core of the school curriculum). Second, a more **liberal** understanding of **nationalism** accepts the integration of foreigners into Russian society based on state policies (incl. the proposition that knowledge of Russian history should be required of new citizens). Third, a **liberal** understanding of identity is based on active **citizenship** and equality of rights (statements refer to equal opportunities in life regardless of gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation, or suggest that freedom of speech includes the criticism of religion). Fourth a **multicultural citizenship** recognizes and promotes difference (reflected by statements referring to the need for measures to integrate immigrants into the workforce and enable migrants to preserve their native language).

In line with **liberal citizenship**, Russian youth is supportive of the principles of freedom of speech, including criticism of religion, and equal opportunities, and values local engagement for the common good. This commitment is higher among respondents with a higher socio-economic status. The commitment to **liberal nationalism** is similarly high among the survey respondents, in particular among those with a higher socio-economic status and among older respondents. The more exclusive **conservative nationalism** is less widely supported (more so among older respondents) and the lowest support amongst our respondents exists for a multicultural understanding of national identity (older respondents and those with a higher

FIGURE 19
Community values
 Average support on a scale from 1 to 100 *



* Respondents were asked to agree / disagree (on a scale) with each of the statements underlying these categories.

Source: Centre for East European and International Studies

socio-economic status expressed lower support for multiculturalist values). The gender differences on all four dimensions do not achieve statistical significance. Overall, Russian youth supports both **liberal nationalism** and **liberal citizenship**. It remains more sceptical of **conservative nationalism** but even more so of **multicultural citizenship**. ► **FIGURE 19**

Conclusion

The self-reported political interest by Russian youth is not matched by their general knowledge or political engagement. However, there is awareness of protests and a general approval of protest as a legitimate way for expressing political opinions. Despite limited overall participation rates, this finding underlines why the regime is concerned and cracks down on protests using disproportionate force.

Self-reported trust in the Russian president is high, though hard to interpret as part of a survey conducted in an authoritarian state. The similarly high level of trust in the Russian army corresponds to the regime’s displays of military capability and high military spending in recent years as well as the official discourse about the annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine. The reported low trust in local and regional institutions mirrors President Putin’s strategy to hold sub-national institutions, esp. regional governors, responsible for addressing the population’s socio-economic needs and thereby shift blame from the centre to the periphery. The Russian Orthodox Church is clearly a contested institution from the ZOIS survey, and the most distrusted institution are the Russian mass media.

Russian youth looks both west and east. Personal travel, mostly for tourism, takes younger people to Western countries and Asia in equal measure, and China and the US top the list of countries the young want Russia to have a close relationship with. Labour mobility inside Russia and beyond is low,

though over 50 per cent of the respondents are contemplating these options. Those who have lived and worked in an EU country deem democratic values and structural economic reforms more important than those who lack this personal experience. Based on the survey data alone it is impossible to say if this trend describes a change of attitudes away from home or if it simply shows that the respondents picked their destinations in line with their political attitudes. However, the correlation definitely maps the scope for the transmission of political and social remittances.

The value set of the young is contradictory. On the one hand, there is widespread support for fundamental liberal values, such as non-discrimination, though only a small share of respondents supports active multiculturalism. Overall, a sizeable part of the population exhibits a conservative understanding of national identity. The latter echoes the values that the regime itself tries to propagate among the young.

Returning to the opening question of whether youth is predominantly critical, loyal or politically disaffected, the survey data suggest that Russian youth poses a medium-term challenge to the regime. The young are somewhat more sceptical than the overall population about the direction in which their country is headed, but political engagement is limited. The political expectations of the young concentrate on socio-economic issues and, to a lesser degree, on anti-corruption reforms. These expectations do not diverge significantly from those of the overall population. However, if the regime fails to address these issues, the younger generation is more likely to compare its situation with the living standards in other countries, both east and west, experienced through first-hand travel experience. Combined with the reported interest in politics, awareness of protests, and trust in voluntary organizations, this could provide the basis for more opposition in the future. The survey also indicates that the regime's official discourse aligns with the reported trust in central state institutions, with the notable exception of the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian mass media, and the ideas about what constitutes a national community. This suggests a partial success of the regime's framing strategy, but also maps the need for readjustment.

Imprint

Authors

Dr. Félix Krawatzek and Prof. Dr. Gwendolyn Sasse

Published by

© Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS) gGmbH

Address

Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS) gGmbH
Mohrenstraße 60
10117 Berlin
info@zois-berlin.de
www.zois-berlin.de

Citation

Krawatzek, Félix/Sasse, Gwendolyn: Youth in Russia. Outlook on Life and Political Attitudes, ZOiS Report 1/2018, (https://www.zois-berlin.de/fileadmin/media/Dateien/ZOiS_Reports/ZOiS_Report_1_2018.pdf)

ISSN 2512-7233

Layout

Yuko Stier

