



# **A Year and a Half in Exile: Progress and Obstacles in the Integration of Russian Migrants**

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## Executive summary

The panel methodology of OutRush allows for real-time monitoring of the integration progress of Russian migrants. We survey the same individuals every six months with consistent questions about their economic stability, social networks, fears, and expectations. This method distinguishes observed changes as stemming from actual developments in Russian migrants' lives rather than random fluctuations. This memo provides an overview of the integration challenges and progress made by Russian migrants.

Our data suggest that the Russian migration outflow is not representative of the broader Russian population but reflects specific societal segments — well-educated, urban, politically active — with high human and social capital. This promises smooth integration and added value to host societies, assuming no major obstacles.

**Russian migrants significantly deviate from the average Russian citizen** in key social and political attitudes. Our findings show a strong disconnection from pro-government sentiment prevalent in Russia and a history of political activism, suggesting a continued political engagement in their new countries.<sup>1</sup> The gender attitudes of Russian migrants significantly diverge from those of Russian citizens, closely aligning instead with the perspectives prevalent in high-income, democratic countries. **High homogeneity** in political background, attitudes, and values among Russian migrants fosters solidarity and mutual support.

Our analysis indicated no significant differences among Russian migrants currently residing abroad, regardless of whether they relocated before or after the mobilization announcement in September 2022.<sup>2</sup> Both groups are similar in socio-demographic composition, political activities, levels of political persecution experienced, and fears of repression. In the pre-mobilization group, there are 9% more people involved in activities like signing petitions, participating in demonstrations, and volunteering. However, this difference could be attributed to the overall decline in political activities among Russian migrants over time, due to a variety of reasons. Another important distinction lies in the field of economic prosperity, with post-mobilization migrants being less affluent and a bit less urbanized compared to pre-mobilization migrants. The observed disparity may stem from the limited mobility of less affluent individuals who emigrated later compared to their wealthier, more mobile peers. A life-threatening event such as the mobilization announcement could have prompted those who previously considered migration financially out of reach to reconsider.

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<sup>1</sup> A point of caution: this should not be interpreted to mean that no one remaining in Russia shares liberal pro-democratic sentiments, nor does it imply that all Russian migrants possess the described qualities. Instead, it suggests that the **average** Russian migrant differs from the **average** Russian citizen. However, it is important to recognize that both the Russian population and the Russian migrant population include individuals with a range of views and attitudes across the political spectrum.

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that by summer 2023 (time of the survey), many post-mobilization migrants may have returned to Russia due to decreased mobilization risks, and therefore are not represented in our survey. Consequently, these results pertain to those who continue to reside abroad.

Trends in economic integration reveal that **two thirds of Russians** who were previously employed by Russian companies have since **left these firms to join international or local ones**. According to our survey, up to 41% of respondents were employed by Russian companies prior to departure. By September 2022, this figure had dropped to 17%, and by the summer of 2023, to 13%.

Income levels for the least affluent migrants have stabilized post-migration, in contrast to the wealthiest migrants, whose income continues to decline compared to pre-migration levels. There is no growing unemployment rate, suggesting that this migration flow is not significantly burdening host countries' welfare budgets.

Legal restrictions in host countries impact the sustainable integration of wartime migrants. Host country policies significantly shape migrant experiences. **Although some countries, such as Turkey or Georgia, are easy to enter and stay in, Russian migrants feel quite precarious in them.** In contrast, countries that are harder to enter provide more opportunities for stable settlement, due to a more stable migrant status.

A quarter of the migrants report recently experienced discrimination, that may hinder social adaptation and impact mental and physical health. In some countries, fear of repression from host state governments exacerbates the situation. Perceived institutional **discrimination undermines trust in local governments**, and notably, this form of trust is the only one that has shown a decline over time in Russian migrants. Trust towards local governments, after an initially high rate of 65% in March 2022, has declined to 53% in summer 2023.

Despite challenges, Russian migrants **are showing signs of gradual social integration**. They maintain high trust in local societies and stay civically engaged in their host countries, participating in activities like volunteering, donating to NGOs, or providing assistance to others. At the same time, despite cutting economic ties, Russian migrants maintain strong and stable social connections to Russia, showing no significant changes even after a year and a half. They remain emotionally attached to Russia, are highly interested in Russian politics, and continue to be a source of information for those back home. This suggests that Russian migrants are developing what can be termed "dual identities", which involve **retaining an interest in their society of origin while simultaneously integrating into their host societies**.

A quarter of migrants either already speak the local language or are putting in substantial effort to do so, and another quarter are learning the local language irregularly. **Only 5% of those who stated in September 2022 that they were learning the local language have completely stopped their language learning efforts by summer 2023.**

**Political activism is declining**, particularly in visible forms like donations and digital activism, accompanied by an **increase in fears of transnational repression**. By the summer of 2023, the fear of repression from the Russian government among Russian migrants had risen by a worrying 17% since September 2022. Up to 78% of Russian migrants expressed fear of persecution by Russian authorities, even while living abroad, a concern that remains prevalent in most host countries.

The highest levels of fear of repression from the Russian government are among migrants in Kazakhstan, Turkey, Armenia, Georgia, and Germany, where 69–77% of respondents reported fear of repression. Russian migrants appear to be worried that the Russian government might extend its influence by orchestrating repressions through the governments of their host countries. This is especially apparent in **Kazakhstan, where 55% of respondents fear repression from local authorities.** To a lesser degree, this concern is also relevant in Georgia and Turkey, where a third of migrants share this fear.

## OutRush project

OutRush is a research project comprising an international team of scholars from academic and analytical institutions. OutRush was founded in March 2022 by social scientists Emil Kamalov and Ivetta Sergeeva (both from European University Institute), who currently serve as principal investigators and research coordinators for OutRush. The OutRush team also includes researchers: Nica Kostenko (Tel Aviv University), Karolina Nugumanova (Scuola Normale Superiore), and Margarita Zavadskaya (Finnish Institute of International Affairs).

OutRush project focuses on a multi-wave survey that examines Russian migrants who left their homeland following the invasion of Ukraine. The methodologies we employ in OutRush include panel surveying, which involves reaching out to the same respondents at regular intervals. This approach enables us to track the dynamics of life trajectories, crucial for understanding the long-term contribution of the Russian immigrant community to both Russia and their host countries. To the best of our knowledge, OutRush is the only panel survey of Russian migrants.

Each survey wave targets a convenience sample of at least 3,000 respondents. We distribute the survey through various channels, such as migrant NGOs and associations, anti-war activists, relocation groups, migrant communities, Russian-speaking media, influencers, and public opinion leaders. Since the inception of the project, we have conducted three survey waves: March 2022, September 2022, and May–July 2023. Currently, over 10,871 respondents from more than 100 countries have participated in the OutRush survey. We have achieved a panel response rate of 65% (comparable to the averages of the German Internet Panel, even though they operate with significantly more resources).

Additionally, our survey data is enriched by data from over 500 interviews we have conducted in partnership with Indiana University in the period of April–November 2023. These interviews were held in five countries popular among Russian migrants: Kazakhstan, Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkey.

## Methodology

OutRush is a panel study of Russian migrants, meaning we survey the same respondents at regular intervals (about every six months). This method allows us to assess the dynamics of people's situations and attribute changes not to random sampling fluctuations but to what is actually happening in the lives of the same individuals. We recruited our respondents online through a variety of channels on Telegram<sup>3</sup> messenger, both political and non-political, as well as through advertisements,

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<sup>3</sup> Recent Russian migrants use Telegram on a massive scale. Telegram recently became very popular in Russia; as of March 2022, it was even reported to be the [most popular](#) messenger in the country. Telegram is [popular](#) primarily among young, educated urban dwellers, a population that comprises the majority of new Russian migrants. It is difficult to imagine an émigré who does not have Telegram installed on her smartphone. The largest emigrant NGOs, migrant movements, and relocation groups deploy Telegram as their main medium of instant communication and coordination (e.g., Kovcheg, Feminist



disseminating the link in the media, and via Russian-speaking opinion leaders. To date, we have conducted three waves of panel research (in March 2022, in September 2022, in May–July 2023). In addition to regular surveys of the same respondents, in each wave, we invite new participants to take part.

The questions employed in the OutRush design are compatible with large national surveys, such as the World Values Survey (WVS), European Social Survey (ESS), Levada Center Omnibus survey, and The Russia Longitudinal Monitoring Survey by Higher School of Economics (RLMS-HSE). This compatibility enables us to make direct comparisons between Russian migrants and populations in other countries, including those in Europe and Russia.

In the study discussed in this report, three data sets were used:

1. **Panel sample** – regular respondents, that is, those who participated in two or more waves of the panel survey. When we describe changes in the lives of Russian migrants over time, we rely on the panel survey data. The number of people who participated in the survey more than once is 2,170. To describe changes across all waves of the survey with high methodological robustness, we rely on the reduced panel comprising respondents who participated in all three waves. The size of this reduced panel equals 470 respondents and is limited due to dropouts and the initially small component of the panel in the first wave.
2. **Combined sample** – regular respondents + new respondents who took the survey through an open link distributed across all waves of the survey. In describing new data on the lives of Russian migrants, we rely on an analysis of the responses of all respondents who took the survey, regardless of whether they participate in the panel study or not. The total size of this sample is 10,871 respondents. Sometimes, we use parts of the combined sample if we refer to particular waves or particular questions that were asked only in certain waves.<sup>4</sup>
3. Materials from more than **500 interviews** with Russian migrants, which the OutRush team collected in collaboration with Indiana University from April to November 2023. Interviews were conducted among people who had migration experience in five countries: Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkey. Informants were recruited among survey participants as well as among those invited by interview participants themselves (snowball method).

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Antiwar Resistance and Relocation Guide). Migrants create shared chats on Telegram for each host society to support each other, as well as separate chats for each city and town where Russians arrive.

<sup>4</sup> Throughout this report, you may notice variations in the estimates of the same variable. This diversity arises because we use different samples for analysis. For discussing changes and trends in the lives of Russian migrants, we rely on a panel sample. However, to illustrate the overall distributions within the Russian migrant population, we use a combined sample (panelists + new participants). Consequently, the same variables might produce slightly different figures, reflecting the dynamic nature of migration from Russia.

It is important to note that we cannot claim our sample is representative of all migrants who left Russia after February 24, 2022. This is due to the lack of reliable information about the entire population of those who have left Russia, and consequently, the inability to create a probabilistic sample. At every stage of the survey, including participant recruitment, data cleaning, and statistical analysis, we employ a set of techniques that improves the quality of our sampling (more details can be found in our [methodological note](#) in the Russian Analytical Digest, February 2023). **The convenience sample, while not representative, aligns with other surveys of Russian migrants, providing cross-validation.** In intersecting sections, such as the socio-demographic profile of Russian migrants, our results closely align with those of fellow researchers studying Russian migrants in Georgia and Armenia ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)). This similarity may be considered a good indicator that we adequately understand the universe of Russian migrants.

## 1. General portrait of Russian migrants

Key points:

- Russian migrants significantly deviate from the average Russian citizen in key social and political attitudes. Our findings show a strong disconnection from pro-government sentiment prevalent in Russia and a history of political activism, suggesting a continued political engagement in their new countries.
- The gender attitudes of Russian migrants significantly diverge from those of Russian citizens, closely aligning instead with the perspectives prevalent in high-income, democratic countries.
- High homogeneity in political background, attitudes, and values among Russian migrants fosters solidarity and mutual support.
- We found no significant differences among Russian migrants currently residing abroad, regardless of whether they relocated before or after the mobilization announcement in September 2022.<sup>5</sup> Both groups are similar in socio-demographic composition, levels of political persecution experienced, and fears of repression.
- An important distinction between two groups lies in the field of economic prosperity, with post-mobilization migrants being less affluent and a bit less urbanized compared to pre-mobilization migrants. The observed disparity may stem from the limited mobility of less affluent individuals who emigrated later compared to their wealthier, more mobile peers. A life-threatening event such as the mobilization announcement could have prompted those who previously considered migration financially out of reach to reconsider.
- We found a 6% difference in the number of people actively engaged in political/civil activities between the two groups. Despite this, the overall level of active participation in both groups is notable, with 73% in the pre-mobilization group and 64% in the post-mobilization group actively participating in political and civic events. The observed difference might be explained by the same factors that contribute to the overall decline in political activity among migrants, as detailed in the “Political and Civic Activities” subsection of this report.

Estimates suggest that during the period of 2022–2023, up to one million of Russians emigrated from their country, driven by dissent towards Russian political decisions and the ongoing conflict with Ukraine, as well as anticipation of potential repression or economic crisis ([1,2,3](#)). This large-

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<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that by summer 2023 (time of the survey), many post-mobilization migrants may have returned to Russia due to decreased mobilization risks, and therefore are not represented in our survey. Consequently, these results pertain to those who continue to reside abroad.

scale migration provoked a discussion within the migrant community about how to call those leaving Russia. This process of identity-building produced terms like “*relocants*” (mostly applied to employees of large companies), “*diaspora*” (used specifically in the context of those already settled somewhere), “*refugees*” (who constitute only a small fraction), “*exiles*”, and “*migrants*”. The discussion highlights the significant variation across groups, defined by the timing, motivations, and conditions of emigration.

## Socio-demographic composition

Based on our data we argue that this outflow of Russian migration is not representative of the broader Russian populace, instead embodying the perspectives of specific segments of society that are well-educated, urban-centric, and politically engaged. On average, our respondents are 34 years old, a notable contrast to the Russian population's mean age of 46 (see **Figure 1**). The majority of these migrants hail from major cities such as Moscow, St. Petersburg, and other urban centers with populations exceeding one million. An overwhelming 77% of the respondents possess either a higher education degree or a postgraduate qualification, a level of education attained by just 27% of the overall Russian population. Additionally, this migrant group exhibits a markedly higher standard of living prior to the war compared to their counterparts remaining in Russia. When queried about their living standards, 20% claimed they could afford to buy a car (compared to 5% in Russia). The gender composition of Russian migrants closely mirrors that of Russia itself: approximately 46% of migrants identify as women, a percentage akin to the gender composition of individuals of their age group in Russia. Among Russian migrants, there is a slightly higher percentage of unmarried individuals compared to the general population.

These distinctions tell us a lot about the kinds of people who were able to leave Russia: this migration is an endeavor for the most privileged citizens. For numerous participants, exiting Russia signified the difficult choice of leaving behind cherished projects and valuable possessions: interviewees reported departing from recently bought apartments and leaving behind newly established professional roles. One of the participants, currently in Tbilisi, elaborated on this by explaining:

*“I lived in Moscow all my life, I really liked Moscow. Not so long ago I moved into my own apartment, settled in, just a year ago... the last job I had in Russia, I had to quit in June because I couldn't continue working remotely. I basically liked the job, I got promoted there at the beginning of February. I mean, everything was kind of good.”*  
(25 years old, man, Georgia)

It is worth remembering however **that this influx includes not only the most economically advantageous groups but also many individuals whose stay in Russia was no longer safe due to their political and civil stances.** NGO employees, artists, activists, rights defenders, and journalists make up a substantial portion of this wave, although they are not as frequently spoken about as “*relocants*”. This group may not have access to the same amount of resources as their counterparts with easily

transferable skills because their expertise is deeply rooted in the Russian context. These specialists are an important asset for the future Russian community as they bring skills in organizing, educating, and building connections, all while working in challenging environments. At the same time, these individuals are the most vulnerable to repression from the Russian government due to their active political stance and might need protection from host countries.

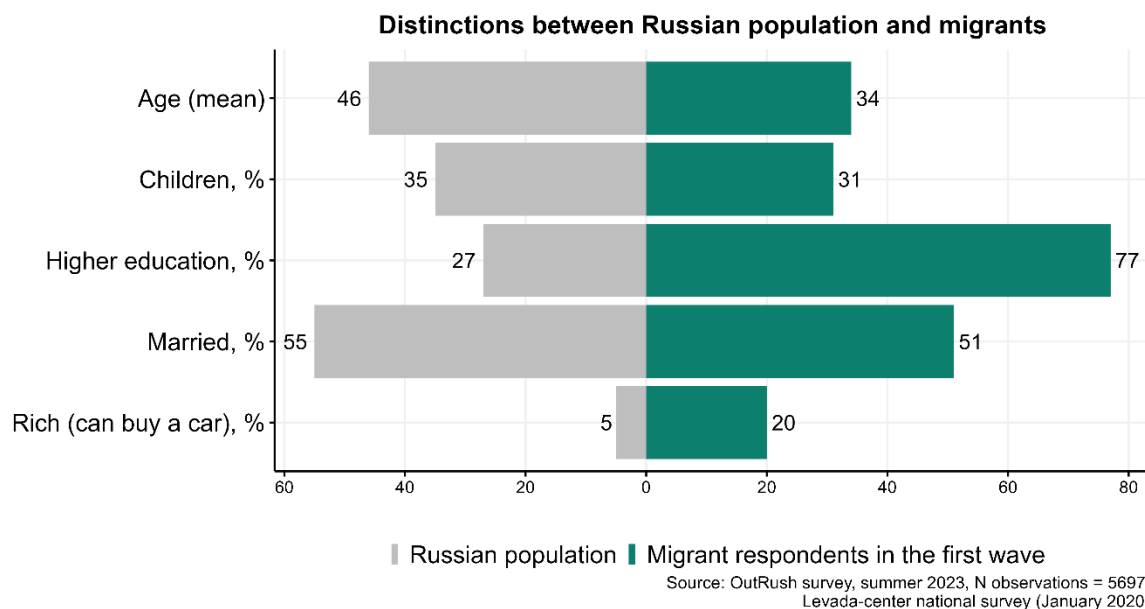


Figure 1. Socio-demographic comparison of wartime Russian migrants with the general population of Russia

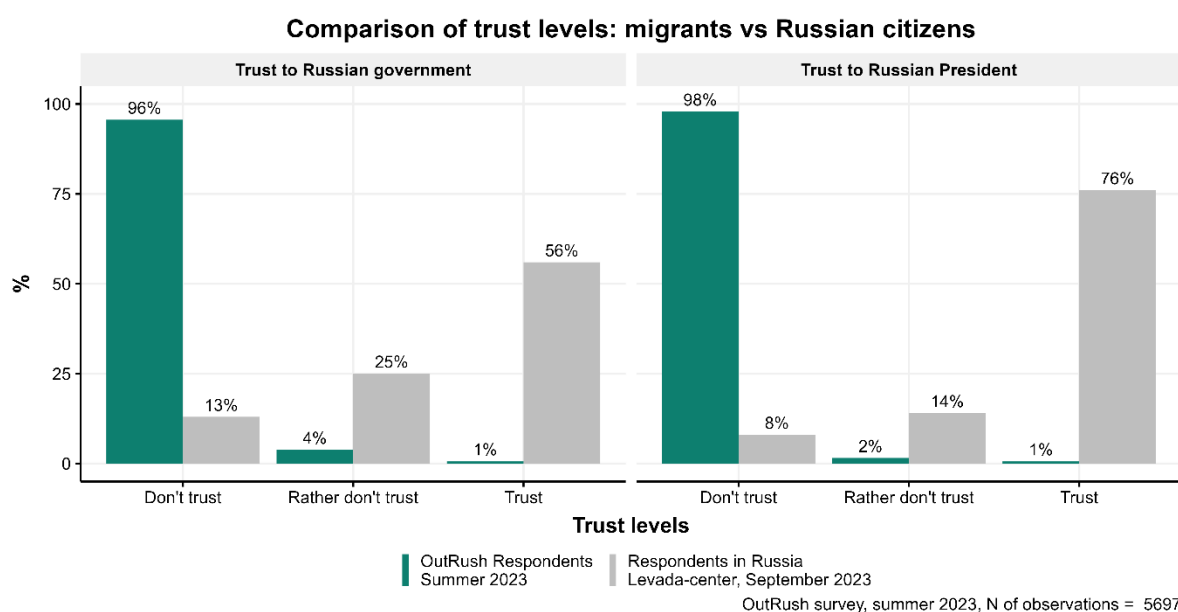
In sum, it is no wonder that many analysts interpret this movement as representing Russia's most significant intellectual and professional exodus since the collapse of the Soviet Union ([1,2,3,4,5,6](#)). Some experts forecast that this diaspora may foster the emergence of a transnational opposition, with the capacity to pose substantive challenges to the existing Russian political regime ([1,2](#)). In 2022, this influx has already had a notable impact on the economies of Eastern Europe and Central Asia countries, particularly Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, and is expected to continue affecting their human capital, demography, economic, and political landscape in the following years ([1](#)).

## Political attitudes and political background

One of the major reasons for leaving the country was political and moral disagreement with the actions of the Russian government. The costs of protesting and expressing this disagreement in Russia were drastically increased due to state repression and political violence against the opposition. That is why, instead of voicing their disagreement in Russia, many politically engaged Russians decided to leave ([1,2,3,4](#)). These predominantly political reasons for emigration explain the composition of the migrants in terms of their political attitudes and background.

New Russian migrants are much more politically engaged compared to the general Russian population. These individuals are highly politicized and well-informed about the political situation in Russia and exhibit a very critical attitude towards the Russian political regime. According to our online panel survey, in contrast to the largely apolitical general Russian populace, about 91% of Russian emigres actively follow political news and express an interest in politics. Furthermore, over 90% of respondents are familiar with the 'smart vote' strategy championed by Aleksei Navalny, with many endorsing it. Less than 10% of respondents supported the incumbent United Russia party in the 2021 State Duma elections. This is combined with high political and civic engagement related back in Russia: before the full-fledged war in Ukraine, 86% of our respondents participated in rallies, donated to NGOs, signed petitions, posted political information on social media, or volunteered. With that said, Russian migrants combine a high level of political interest with the resources and willingness to turn it into action.

The level of trust in the institutions of the Russian President and the Russian government serves as a significant indicator to assess the political attitudes of Russian migrants. As illustrated in **Figure 2**, a vast majority (98%) of OutRush respondents express no trust in the Russian President, compared to 8% of the general Russian population who felt the same way in September 2023. Only 1% of OutRush respondents indicated trust in the Russian President in Summer 2023, whereas 76% of Russian citizens expressed similar sentiments. The sentiment is analogous concerning trust in the Russian Government: 96% of OutRush respondents stated they do not trust the Russian Government at all, compared to just 13% of Russian citizens who responded the same way.



*Figure 2. Trust towards Russian institutions: A comparison between Russian migrants and the general Russian population*

Russian migrants hold pronounced anti-regime attitudes which translate into political interest and engagement. Here is how one of the informants, who first migrated to Georgia and then to the Netherlands, describes her experience with political activism when she still lived in Russia:

*"I went to 2 Navalny rallies, it was in '21. Well, it was scary because it was unclear what would happen, there were really a lot of 'cosmonauts' [= policemen], police vans, that's all. There was a crowd, and you don't understand how to behave in this crowd. I had a big dilemma because you are going to a rally, but you are also a mother, and you have a child, and of course, there is another parent, so then, I remember, we went to Navalny's rallies in turns with my husband."  
(28 years old, woman, Georgia)*

The data on the political orientations of Russian migrants indicates not only their high political and civic engagement, but also a significant disconnection from the pro-government sentiment prevalent within Russia's general population. The personal account of political activism, despite the risks involved, underscores a willingness to engage politically, a trait that could persist and manifest in their new countries of residence, potentially influencing their integration and the political landscape therein and is likely to remain a central part of their identity in the diaspora.

## Social trust

Social trust is an important indicator for understanding the integration process for several reasons. First, it underpins solidarity and successful social interactions, correlating with [physical safety](#), [economic prosperity](#), and overall [happiness](#) and [life satisfaction](#). In communities where trust is prevalent, there is a [higher](#) political engagement and a greater inclination towards charitable acts and volunteering. Second, high trust levels significantly contribute to [economic](#) cooperation and growth. The rich human capital of these communities, coupled with a profound trust in both people generally and in the host societies specifically, creates an ideal environment for the economic and social integration of immigrants.

The Russian emigration experience is notably marked by a high level of trust, a phenomenon that is uncommon not just among [migrant](#) groups but also within the general population. In the OutRush survey, general social trust was measured using a standard question from the World Value Survey: we asked respondents whether they agree that most people can be trusted, or if one should be careful around others. As indicated in the graph, OutRush respondents display relatively high levels of general trust. 59% of OutRush respondents believe that most people can be trusted. In contrast, only 23% of Russian citizens and 40% of German citizens share this sentiment (see **Figure 3**).

This significant trust level reflects a strong sense of solidarity, which further manifests in various forms of mutual assistance. For example, up to 40% of respondents report having helped other Russian migrants in the three months prior to the survey. Russian migrants launched multiple support groups operating through online communication channels and providing support with information, shelters, legal advice and other resources for those who want to leave Russia and try to settle in new places ([1,2,3,4](#)). The websites and Telegram channels associated with these organizations have amassed audiences numbering in the hundreds of thousands, while their staff and volunteer networks consist

of hundreds of individuals. Notably, Kovcheg (The Arc), one of the largest among them, reported receiving a staggering [10,000](#) inquiries for assistance within the initial three days of its launch in March 2022. Many of them prioritize political migrants and those who are in greater need suggesting that the mechanism of solidarity develop through common political identity.

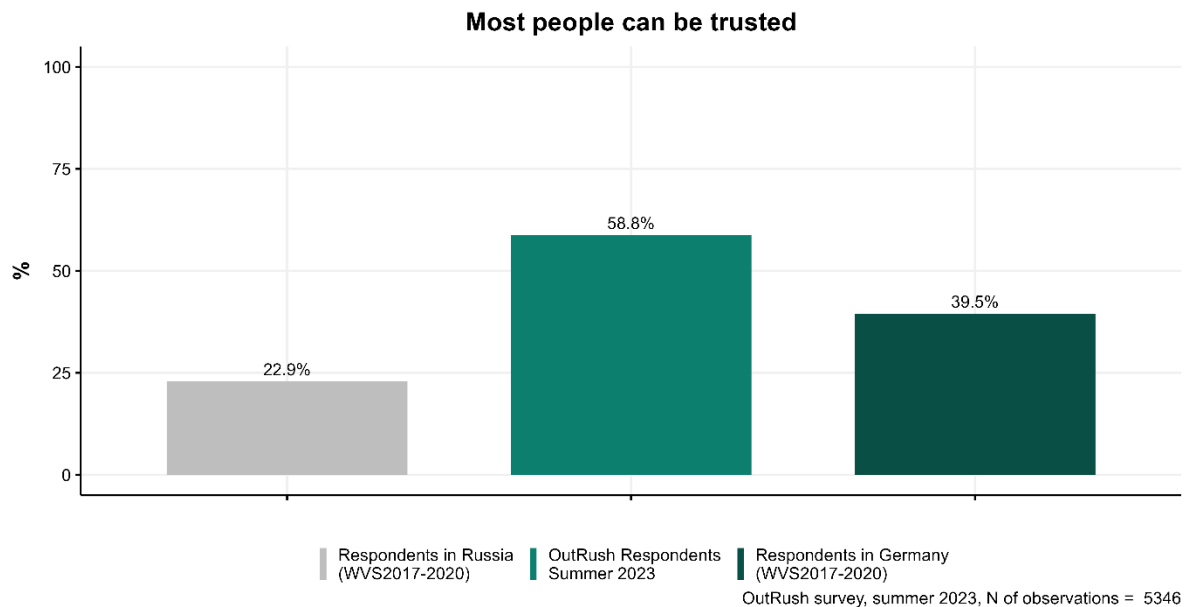


Figure 3. General social trust among Russian migrants, and Russian and German populations

In summary, **the new wave of migrants has a substantial foundation for social cooperation both within their own community and with their host societies.** Russian migrants exhibit high levels of trust towards both fellow Russian migrants and host communities. Combined with the significant human capital they possess, this trust may facilitate their successful economic and social integration, which could be mutually beneficial for both the migrants and the societies they reside in. Nevertheless, **it is important to consider other obstacles that Russians face** after emigration, namely societal and institutional discrimination, legal precarity, transnational repression, and complex insecurities resulting from a combination of these factors.

## Gender attitudes

Gender attitudes serve as a significant proxy for support for democracy and other crucial political attitudes ([1,2,3](#)). We measured the gender attitudes of Russian migrants using two standard questions from the World Value Survey (WVS) research. Respondents were asked to state their agreement or disagreement with the statements, **“Men make better business executives than women do”** and **“When jobs are scarce, men should have more rights to work than women”**. Both questions were also examined by the WVS in their 2017–2020 survey rounds in Russia and Germany which we used as comparative baselines.



As shown in the graph, the gender attitudes of Russian migrants differ considerably from those of Russian citizens. 92% of Russian migrants either strongly disagree or disagree with the idea that men are better executives than women (see **Figure 4**). This sentiment aligns closely with the views of German citizens, among whom 87% share the same perspective, compared to only 42% of Russian citizens. The second question further underscores this trend: 93% of OutRush respondents disagree or strongly disagree with the notion that men should be prioritized in the job market over women during times of job scarcity (see **Figure 5**). This percentage is much closer to the prevailing German sentiment (with 79% sharing this view) than to the Russian one (where only 36% concur).

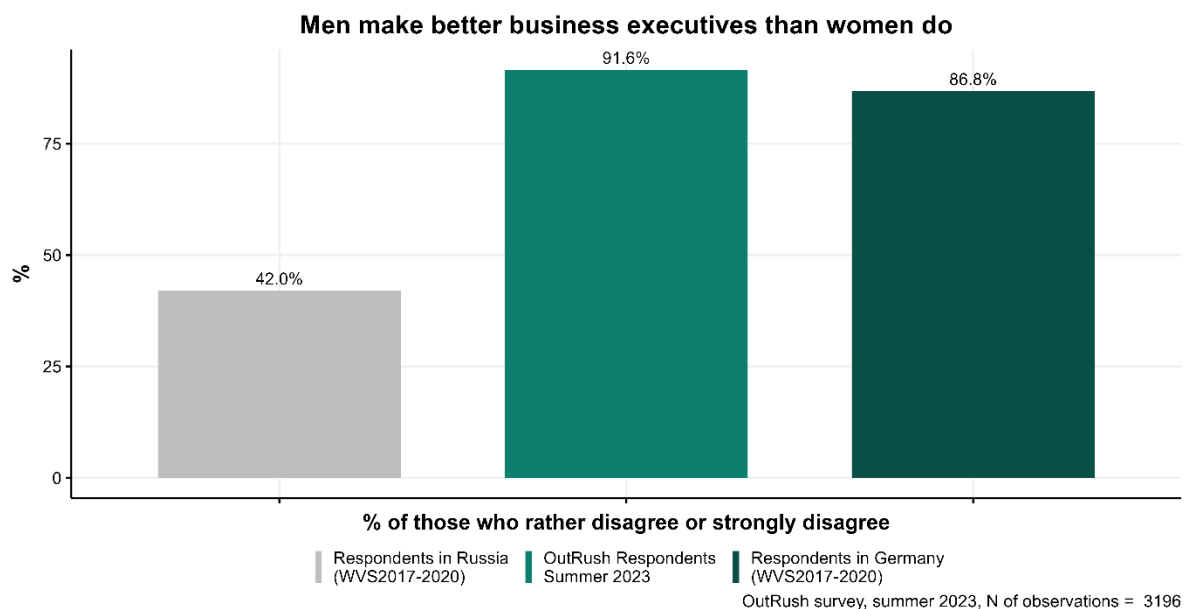


Figure 4. Prevalence of gender egalitarian norms among Russian migrants, and Russian and German populations, measured as disagreement with the statement that men are better business executives

In summary, these results indicate that, in terms of pivotal social attitudes such as gender equality and political attitudes, Russian migrants significantly differ from the average Russian citizen. Their perspectives align more closely with those of high-income, democratic countries at least in regard to these attitudes that we measured in the survey. This should not be interpreted to mean that no one remaining in Russia shares similar sentiments, nor does it imply that all Russian migrants possess the described qualities. Instead, it suggests that the *average* Russian migrant differs from the *average* Russian citizen. It is important to recognize that both the Russian population and the Russian migrant population include individuals with a range of views and attitudes across the political spectrum.

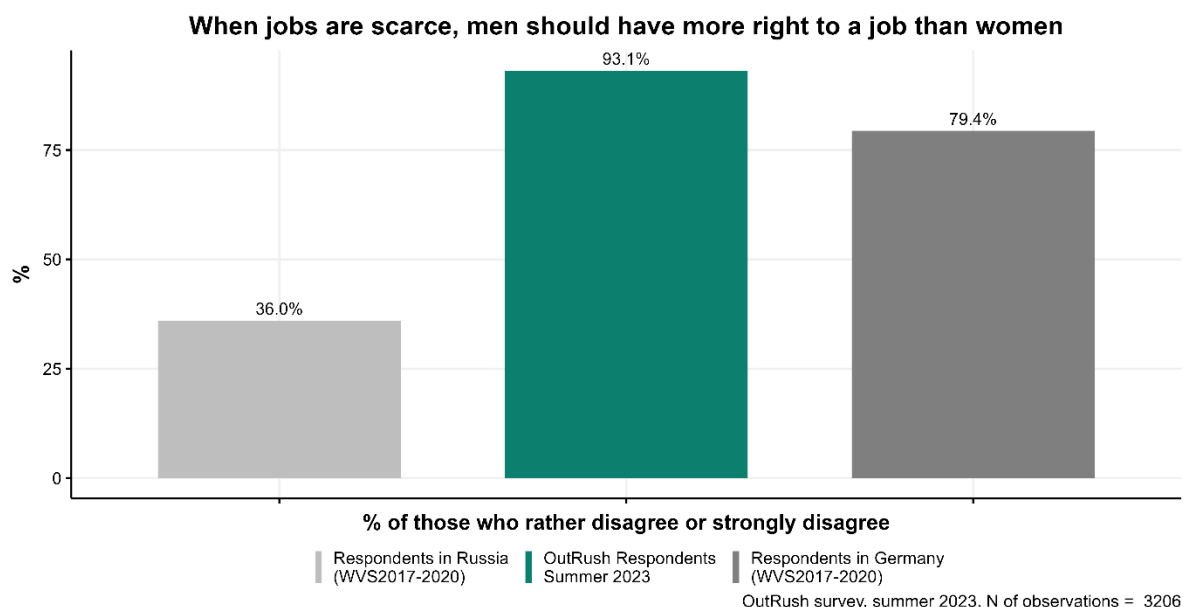


Figure 5. Prevalence of gender egalitarian norms among Russian migrants, and Russian and German populations, measured as disagreement with the statement that men should have priority for a job when it is scarce

## Are migrants who left before and after military mobilization different?

Many have argued that there are distinct differences between two groups of Russian migrants: those who left immediately or soon after the invasion of Ukraine started (often referred to as “*Februarists*” in Russian) and those who left after the announcement of “partial” mobilization in September 2022 (“*Septembrists*”), in terms of social composition, political attitudes, and motivations ([1,2](#)). Some suggest that the post-mobilization wave of Russian migrants mainly consists of males evading mobilization who do not necessarily harbor anti-war sentiments ([1,2](#)). The post-mobilization wave poses an interesting dilemma for host countries, especially those neighboring Russia: are political migrants a brain gain or a security threat?

To assess whether there are differences between the two waves, we analyzed individuals in the OutRush survey who are currently living abroad and left Russia either before or after the mobilization. Our comparison focused on their socio-demographic characteristics, political activities, and the perceived risk of repression if they were to return to Russia.

The graph shows that Russian migrants who left before and after the mobilization announcement share many important socio-demographic traits (see [Figure 6](#)). Indeed, there are 11% more males among those who left after the mobilization announcement (59% of post-mobilization respondents are male compared to 48% of pre-mobilization respondents), yet the gender composition remains quite balanced and similar in both groups. Another noticeable difference is in income, with post-

mobilization migrants having 7% fewer individuals in their group who can easily afford a car. Otherwise, the socio-demographic profile of the two groups is quite similar, with the proportion of people who have higher education, from large cities, are married, and have children being almost identical.

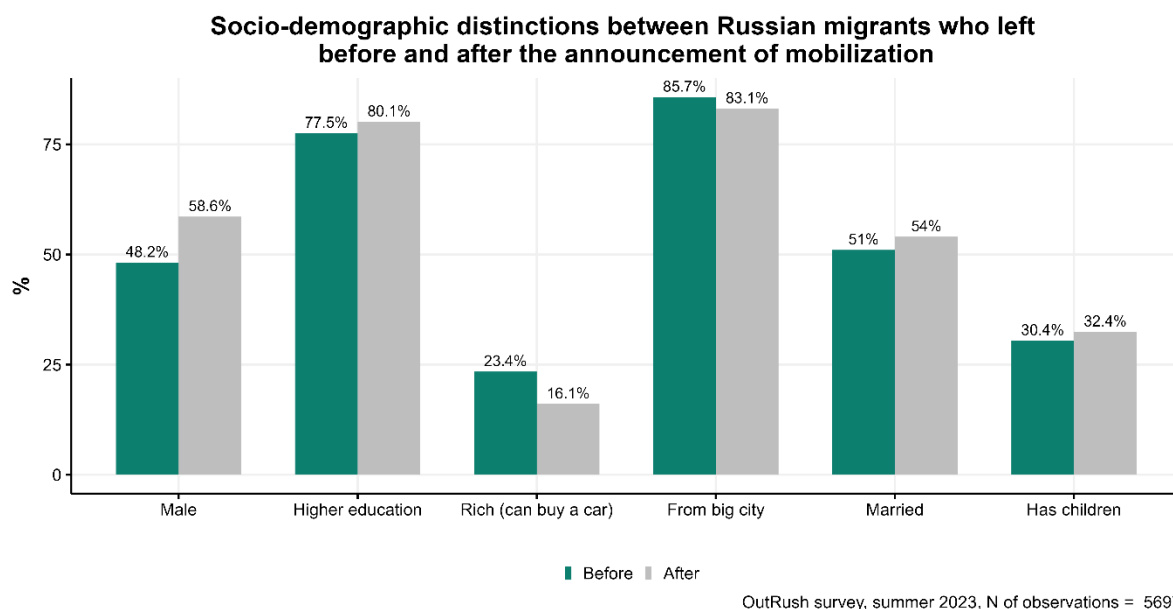


Figure 6. Socio-demographic comparison of wartime Russian migrants who left before and after the announcement of mobilization

When asked if they were afraid of being drafted for military service in Russia, 39% of pre-mobilization and 57% of post-mobilization respondents replied affirmatively<sup>6</sup> (see **Figure 8**). Regarding political/civil engagement, 9% more people in the pre-mobilization group are involved in activities such as signing petitions, participating in demonstrations, and volunteering. Nevertheless, the overall number of politically and civically active individuals in both groups is impressive, with 73% in the pre-mobilization group and 64% in the post-mobilization group actively participating. (see **Figure 7**). The observed difference might be explained by the same factors that contribute to the overall decline in political activity among migrants, as detailed in the 'Political and Civic Activities' subsection of this report.

The two groups present quite similar profiles in terms of experienced repression and the fear of it. The similar percentage of respondents (around 43%) in both groups indicated that they had experienced some form of repression in Russia (this could include, for example, psychological pressure, job loss due to political views, detention during demonstrations, or imprisonment). More than half of the individuals in both groups feel vulnerable to possible repression from the Russian government (see **Figure 8**). Interestingly, there is a difference in the number of people who fear repression from

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that at least half of the pre-mobilization respondents were asked this question before the announcement of the partial mobilization, so some of them may not have been afraid because they were unaware of the impending draft.

the governments of their host countries, with 9% more people in the post-mobilization group feeling somewhat or very afraid of being subject to repression by the host country.

In summary, our data do not confirm the significant distinctions between the two groups of Russian migrants. While the first wave can be described as political emigration, the second more closely resembles an evacuation, with individuals exhibiting characteristics typical of refugees. Nonetheless, these people are quite similar in their socio-demographic composition, levels of experienced political persecution, and fears of repression.

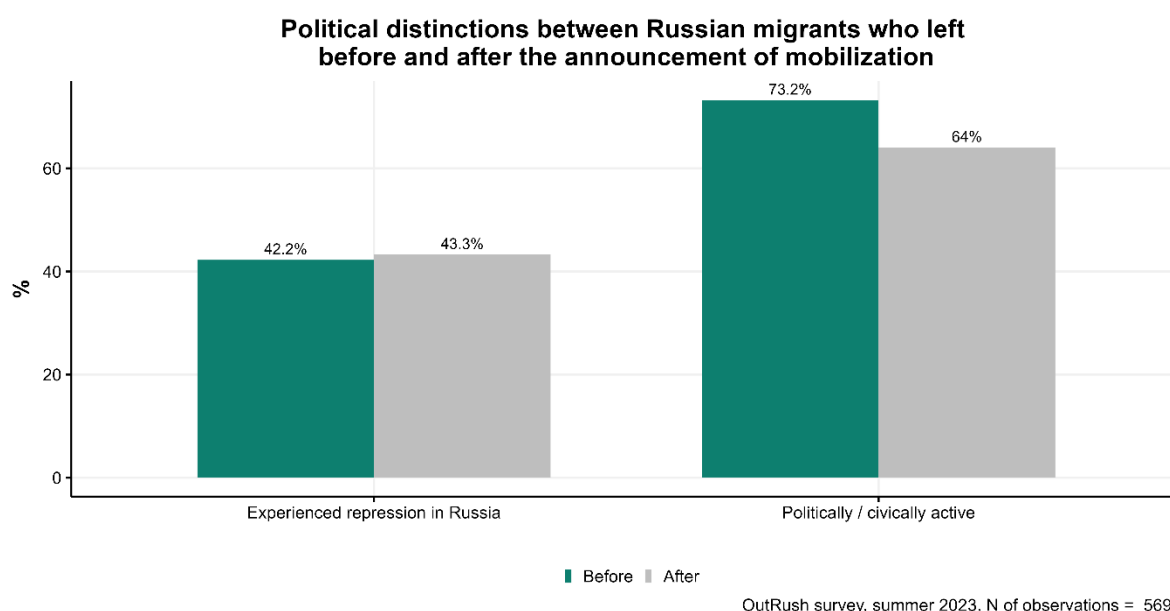


Figure 7. Differences in political engagement and experience of repression between wartime Russian migrants who left before and after the announcement of mobilization

This is how one of the informants who left Russia after the announcement of the mobilization, explains his decision to leave and highlights that the period preceding the announcement was already somewhat unbearable for him to continue staying in Russia:

*"I would generally attribute the reason for leaving to some kind of self-preservation instinct. At that time, the mobilization seemed like something epic. I understood that things would only get worse, and living in such an atmosphere was not at all enjoyable for me. It was already physically hard for me to be at home. Because I was constantly scared."*  
(27 years old, man, Georgia)

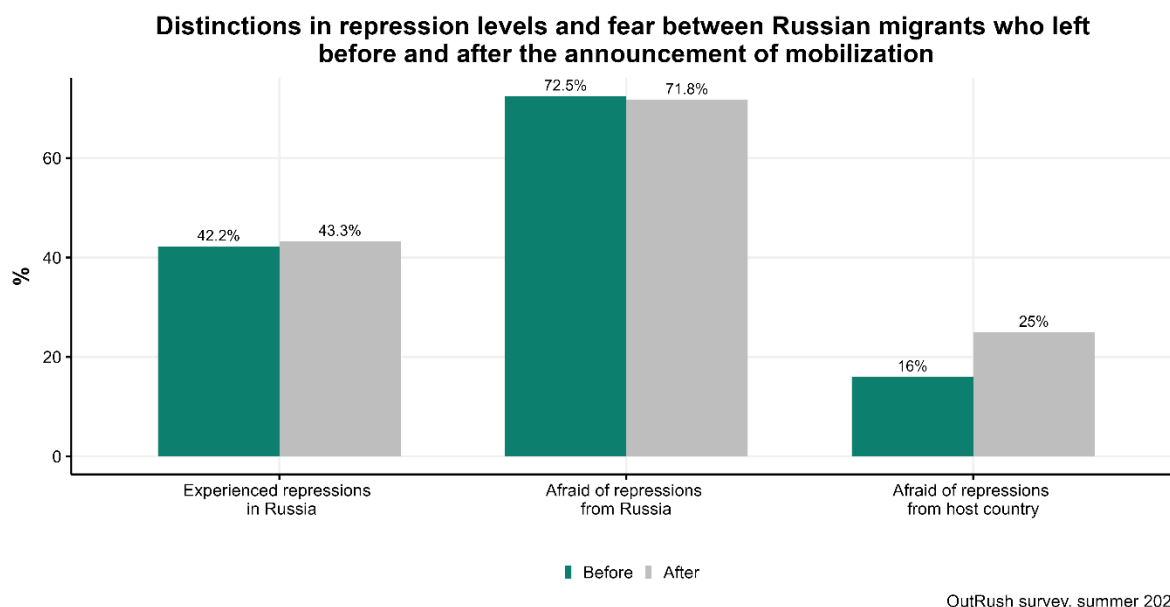


Figure 8. Fears of military draft and repressions among different waves of Russian emigration

An important distinction lies in the field of economic prosperity, with post-mobilization migrants being less affluent and a bit less urbanized compared to pre-mobilization migrants. This difference may be attributed to the limited mobility of less affluent individuals who decided to emigrate later compared to their more mobile, affluent counterparts. Additionally, a life-threatening event such as mobilization may prompt to leave Russia those who previously thought they could not afford to migrate. However, we should emphasize that by the time of our survey in summer 2023, many post-mobilization migrants might have already returned to Russia because the risk of being mobilized became much less pronounced by that time, and therefore they were not captured in our survey. Still, the main argument is that the post-mobilization migrants **who are currently residing abroad bear a strong resemblance to the composition of anti-war pre-mobilization migrants** who fled either immediately or shortly after the invasion of Ukraine, primarily driven by moral reasons.

## 2. Integration: progress and obstacles

The unique methodology of OutRush enables us to monitor the progress of Russian migrant integration in real time. We survey the same respondents every six months, asking them identical questions about their economic stability, social networks, fears, and expectations. This approach allows us to attribute observed changes not to random fluctuations, but to actual developments in the lives of Russian migrants. In this section, we offer a brief overview of the challenges Russian migrants encounter in integrating into host countries and the progress they have made.

Key points:

- Trends in economic integration reveal that **two thirds of Russians who were previously employed** by Russian companies have since **left these firms to join international or local ones**. According to our survey, up to 41% of respondents were employed by Russian companies prior to departure. By September 2022, this figure had dropped to 17%, and by the summer of 2023, to 13%.
- While there is income stabilization for the poorest migrants, the wealthiest do not experience the same.
- We do not observe a growing rate of unemployment, thus this flow is not burdening the welfare budgets of host countries significantly.
- **Improved economic conditions alone cannot guarantee a sustainable position** when migrants face legal restrictions in many of the countries they reside. The result is a **precarity reported by 56% of migrants**, with Turkey and Georgia showing the greatest difficulties among popular destinations.
- The insecurity is further exacerbated by **25% reporting experiences of discrimination**, either from local people or institutions. In some countries, this situation is further worsened by the fear of repression from host state governments.
- Despite the precarity and discrimination, Russian migrants demonstrate signs **of gradual social integration**. They continue to maintain high trust towards local societies and exhibit increased emotional attachment and political interest in their host countries. Nevertheless, perceived institutional discrimination is eroding trust in local governments.

### *The economic situation*

Economically, the decision to relocate was easiest for those whose employment allowed them to maintain their incomes even after emigration. Those working in international companies, various

types of freelance, or remotely for Russian firms could still retain some form of income outside of Russia. At the same time, many Russian companies, as well as the Russian government, began making life more difficult for remote workers and demanding their return. For instance, Yandex — one of Russia's largest IT companies — started forbidding employees of Russian offices from working remotely from abroad.

Considering these challenges in maintaining employment, **many migrants are systematically resigning from Russian companies and seeking employment with local or international firms or switching to freelance.** As we learned from interviews and open survey feedback, for many Russian migrants additionally to economic reasons, it was morally unacceptable to continue working for Russia-based companies because they equated it with supporting the war through their taxes.

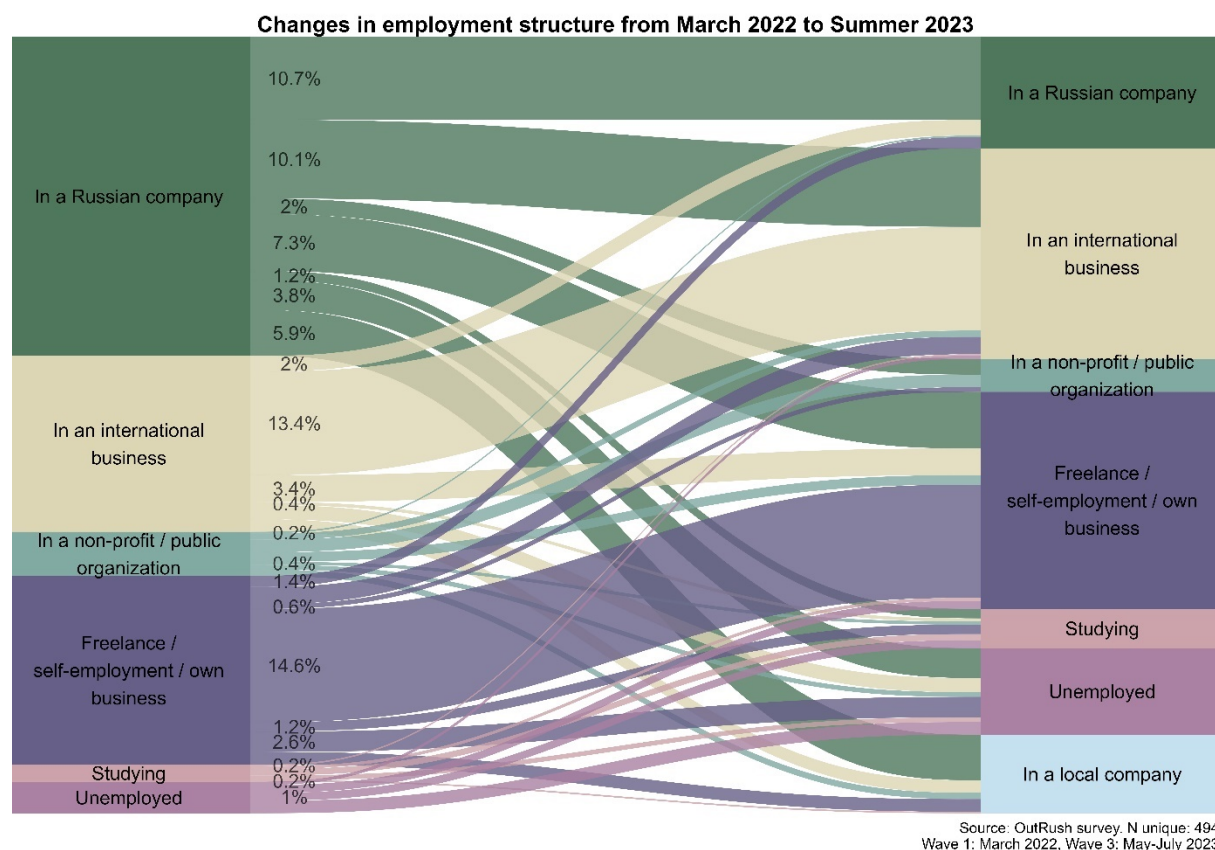


Figure 9. Changes in Russian migrants' employment structure from March 2022 to Summer 2023. Graph based on panel sample: on responses from those who participated in both the first and third waves of the OutRush survey

According to our survey, up to 41% of respondents were employed by Russian companies prior to departure (see **Figure 9**). By September 2022, this figure had dropped to 17%, and by the summer of 2023, to 13%. The graph below shows the change in employment structure among panelists who participated in both the first and the last wave of the survey. Over eighteen months, the most common transitions were to international companies (10%), freelance (7%), and local companies (6%).

In general, the financial situation of Russian migrants has deteriorated compared to the pre-emigration incomes they previously earned. For the majority of migrants, the move was associated with significant costs: their incomes have dropped by one or two income categories as compared to the previous ones (1). After half a year in emigration for every second respondent, who before migration did not have problems buying expensive home appliances, it has become difficult not only to buy appliances but also clothes. In some cases, Russian migrants' income fell from the highest income category ("could not deny themselves buying anything") into three categories at once: now they cannot afford to buy large household appliances and in rare cases even clothes. This significant reduction, however, did not compel them to return to Russia, further emphasizing that the understanding of such emigration cannot be solely reduced to economic motivations.

After an initial deterioration, the financial situation of migrants shows a slight stabilization and small improvement, but only for those at the lower end of the economic spectrum. A comparison of migrant income between September 2022 and summer 2023 reveals that almost half of those who could previously afford only food were able to improve their economic conditions to include both food and clothing. Similarly, a considerable number of people who could afford food and clothes in September 2022 were able to purchase more expensive items, such as TVs or refrigerators, by Summer 2023. However, we can observe that the most affluent Russian migrants continued to experience a further decline in their incomes.

## ***Precarity of position: restricted rights***

Another important dimension of migrants' integration is their level of sustainability in host countries. Wartime migrants find themselves in conditions that vary widely across host countries. These conditions shape the opportunities and resources available for support within the host country. To gauge the subjective position of Russian migrants in their host countries, we asked them about their perceived stability in terms of various rights, including the right to work, healthcare, and residency. **Merely 41% of Russian migrants consider their status as stable or somewhat stable regarding diverse rights in their host societies.** However, this perception markedly differs across countries. In some host countries, the proportion of those feeling stable is as low as 16%.

As is clear from the graph, Russian migrants in Israel feel that their position is the most stable: 67% of respondents indicated that they feel the stability of their position is a 4 or 5 on a scale where 1 is "not stable at all" and 5 is "very stable" (see **Figure 10**). Serbia and Germany are not far behind Israel in terms of subjective stability, with 55% and 53% of respondents indicating that they feel stable in these countries respectively. Least stable positions are reported among respondents in Georgia and Turkey, with only 19% and 16% of Russian migrants respectively indicating their positions as stable in these countries.



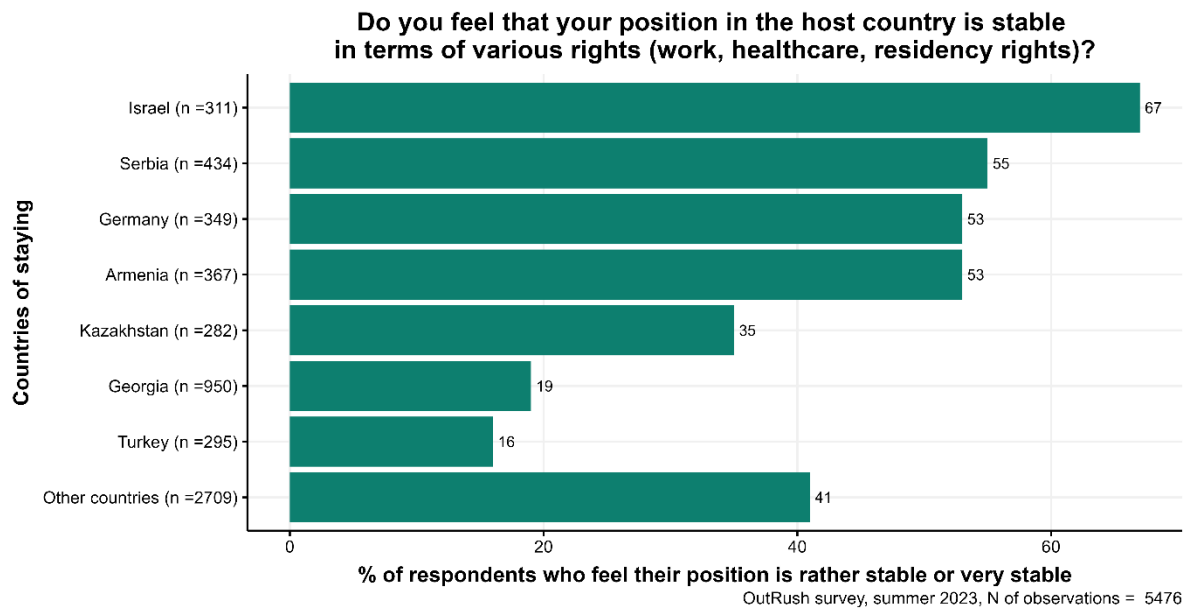


Figure 10. Perceived legal security among Russian migrants in different countries. Graph based on combined sample: it includes regular and new respondents

The results indicate that although some countries, such as Turkey or Georgia, are easy to enter and stay in (due to the lack of visa requirements and the potential for indefinite stay), Russian migrants feel quite precarious in them. In contrast, countries that are harder to enter provide more opportunities for stable settlement, possibly due to a more stable migrant status.<sup>7</sup> This is how one of the informants describe her concerns about getting a residence permission in Georgia:

*"The initial plan was to try to obtain a residence permit, settle down, and stay to live in Georgia for some time. But then, over the year, they stopped issuing residence permits based on the principle we wanted to use — which was opening a sole proprietorship, earning a certain income from it, and paying taxes, which would have been my husband's salary. And so now we are in a bit of uncertainty, because living without a residence permit and not understanding how to do is a bit scary. At any moment, they could change the regulations. We don't want to have to flee somewhere in 3 days again, to leave everything, to abandon it. And this makes us think that we need to go somewhere else, probably, where there's an opportunity to settle down and get a residence permit. So, this is something like, from a legal point of view, this unclear attitude, and what will happen with Russians further in Georgia, with Russian passports."*  
(33 years old, woman, Georgia)

<sup>7</sup> For example, in Israel, Russian migrants often have immediate rights to citizenship that provide them with stable status in the country due to their Jewish heritage.

It is also possible that countries with more experience in refugees and migrants' integration<sup>8</sup> are better at maintaining necessary migrant services and support, compared to countries with less experience in managing migration flows (such as Georgia and Turkey). Finally, we can assume that people who end up staying in high-income countries are generally better off compared to those in middle-income countries, which defines the stability of their position and access to services and support. It is, however, interesting to note that some middle-income countries with limited experience in migration, such as Serbia and Armenia, have managed to offer Russian migrants relatively stable conditions, as indicated by the results. We assume that the variety of policies in these host countries account significantly for the differences in the experiences of migrants.

## Discrimination

Perceived discrimination is another important obstacle for integration. Migrants frequently occupy marginalized positions within societal hierarchies, encountering adverse perceptions from dominant groups (1,2,3,4) especially when certain immigrants and ethnic minorities are linked with security threats (1,2). Perceived discrimination plays a [pivotal role](#) in migrants' well-being, assimilation and overall mental and physical health.

Approximately **one quarter of Russian migrants report being discriminated against in 2023**. In our OutRush survey, we asked Russian migrants whether they had encountered two types of discrimination: by local organizations (such as banks, immigration services, hospitals, etc.) and by local citizens (at public gatherings, when renting accommodation, etc.). 24% of Russian migrants reported that they experienced discrimination of any kind during the last three months before the survey. These numbers indicate a great deal of discrimination compared to the European average: overall, 15% of migrants in Europe [report](#) experiencing discrimination in an even broader time period, the last year, in 2023.<sup>9</sup> The prevalence of fear of discrimination among Russian migrants is even higher than reported discrimination: 41% of all respondents report being "somewhat afraid" or "very afraid" of discrimination with only 28% with "not afraid at all". The evidence from panel data does not show any tendency towards decreasing discrimination; rather, **it appears to be increasing**.<sup>10</sup>

People encounter discrimination from local organizations more often than from local citizens. As seen in the graph, Turkey leads in reported institutional discrimination in 2023, with 23% of respondents indicating that they experienced discrimination in the last three months at the time

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<sup>8</sup> Like Israel, which has major experience in managing immigrants flows, and Germany, which [reported](#) the largest total number of immigrants (874,400) in 2021 in EU.

<sup>9</sup> In the current study, the prevalence of discrimination is measured based on experiences reported in the last three months. Should a longer period be considered, we anticipate an even higher prevalence of reported discrimination.

<sup>10</sup> A point of caution: measures of discrimination differ between waves, with the third wave employing a more nuanced measure of discrimination compared to the second wave.

of the survey (see **Figure 11**). Germany is not far behind, with 21% reporting discrimination from local organizations. Georgia, Kazakhstan, Serbia, and Armenia range from 14% to 18% in reported discrimination, which is close to the average in all other countries (19%). It is assumed that most cases originate from banking institutions, which currently have limitations in service for Russian nationals in many countries due to sanctions. The high levels of reported discrimination in Turkey may be explained by recent cases of mass resident permit [rejections](#).

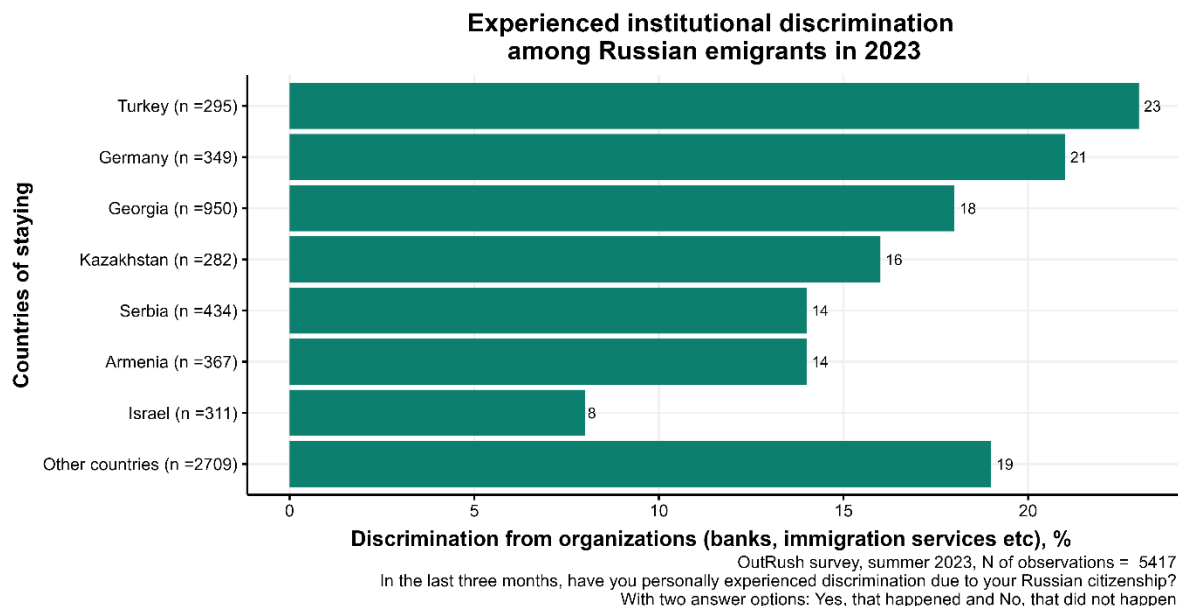


Figure 11. Institutional discrimination reported by Russian migrants, experienced from host countries' institutions during the last three months before the survey. Graph based on combined sample: it includes regular and new respondents

For political migrants, the primary source of fear of discrimination may be the concern over not being allowed to remain in the host country, adding stress to an already uncertain situation:

*"For those whose permits are about to expire, or who are just starting the application process, there are many rejections. A rejection means that you have to leave, and it's unclear where to go. In the case of some situation where you're caught as an illegal immigrant, you could very well be deported to your country of citizenship. They might detain you temporarily and then send you to the Russian Federation, which, of course, would be highly undesirable."*  
(50 years old, man, Turkey)

Georgia is the only country where discrimination from locals is comparable to discrimination from organizations: 24% of respondents indicated experiencing interpersonal discrimination in the past three months (see **Figure 12**). This is how one of our informants describes their disturbing experience of interpersonal discrimination in some restaurants in Georgia:

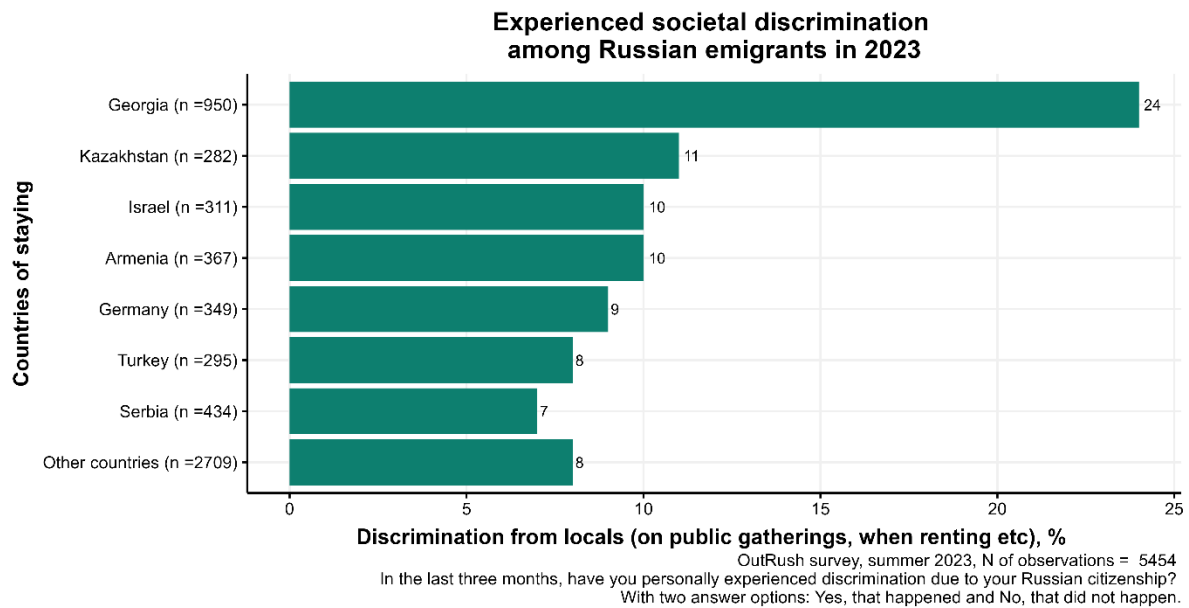


Figure 12. Interpersonal discrimination reported by Russian migrants, experienced from people in host countries during the last three months before the survey. Graph based on combined sample: it includes regular and new respondents.

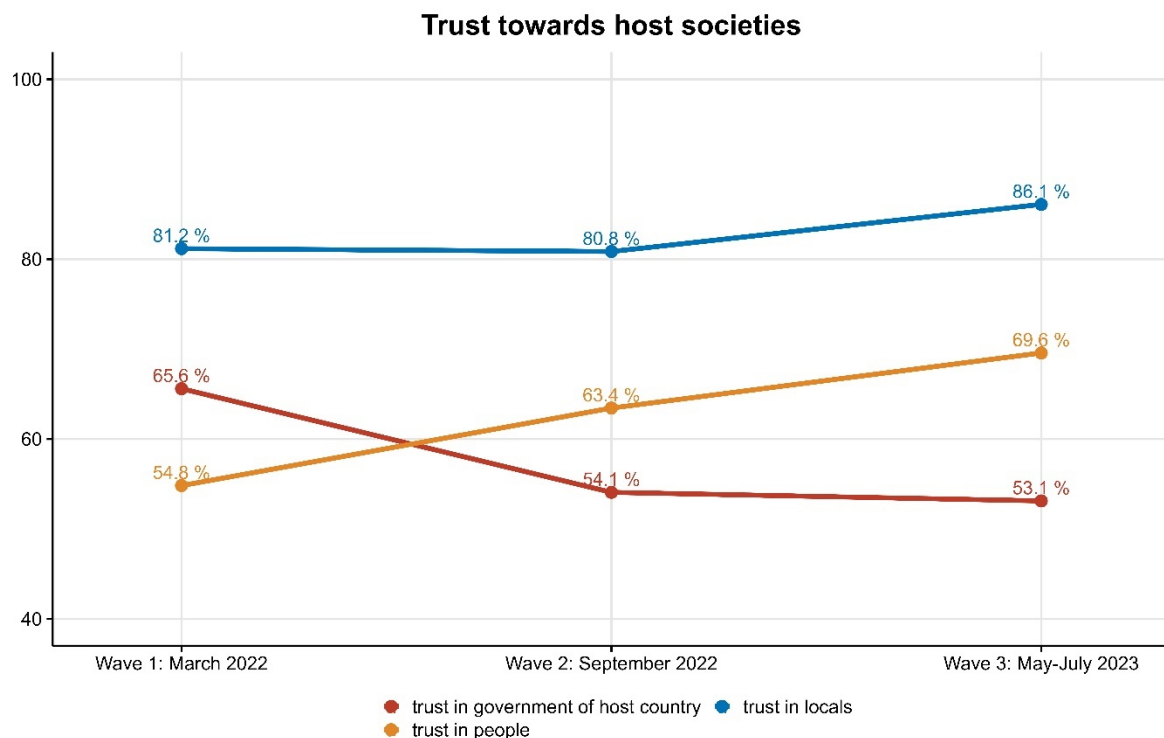
*"There are some establishments here... There are young people working there, hipsters, who you'd think should be friendly. But they give you strange looks, and the menu is accessed via a QR code. So there's a sticker on the table, and you scan the QR code to see how much the kebabs cost, for example. And then it just shows photos with captions like 'you're terrorists, go away,' which is very unpleasant. I mean, why even open the doors of the restaurant if that's how you're going to treat people? It's very strange, and this happened quite a bit. It was really uncool. Yeah, that was the most unpleasant thing. These were all very young people. So, in short, they seemed to think this was acceptable. I don't agree with it. It's too harsh."*  
(27 years old, man, Georgia)

In other popular countries, discrimination from locals ranges from 7% to 11%, which is higher than the average across all countries (8%). It is possible that discrimination is generally higher in countries where the population of Russian migrants is larger and thus more visible to locals.

## Social ties with host society

As observed from the panel structure of the research, the general level of trust in people impressively rose by 15% since March 2022, with 70% of panelists reporting trust in people in general (see **Figure 13**). High levels of general social trust spill over into trust towards host countries: 86% of Russian migrants report trust toward citizens of host countries in 2023. As noted above, this creates

a solid social foundation for economic and social cooperation between new migrants and host communities and promises smooth integration into the host societies, provided there are no other obstacles.



Source: OutRush survey. N unique: 470  
Wave 1: March 2022, Wave 2: September 2022, Wave 3: May-July 2023

*Figure 13. Changes in trust towards Russians abroad and in locals from March 2022 to Summer 2023. Graph based on panel sample: on responses from those who participated in all three waves of the OutRush survey*

In contrast, trust towards local governments, after an initially high rate of 66%, has declined to 53%. This decrease is probably linked to institutional discrimination, such as the annulment of residency permits and restrictions on banking services, affecting migrants with Russian passports.

Interest in the politics of the host countries remains comparatively high: the number of people who are very or somewhat interested in local politics rose by 3%, from 64% in September 2022 to 67% in Summer 2023, which is often higher than that of the local population. For comparison, the proportion of those interested in politics among Georgians is 36%, according to the latest wave of the World Value Survey (2017–2022).

The high level of interest in local politics may be attributed to the active general political stance of Russian migrants, which translates into an interest in new societies. This is supported by media reports of the engagement of Russian migrants in protests, for instance in pro-democracy [demonstrations](#) in Israel and in [rallies](#) against foreign agents law in Georgia. Russian migrants may also actively follow local news to stay aware of possible new restrictions for Russian nationals in the countries they reside in. Finally, high interest in local politics may be a sign of good integration.

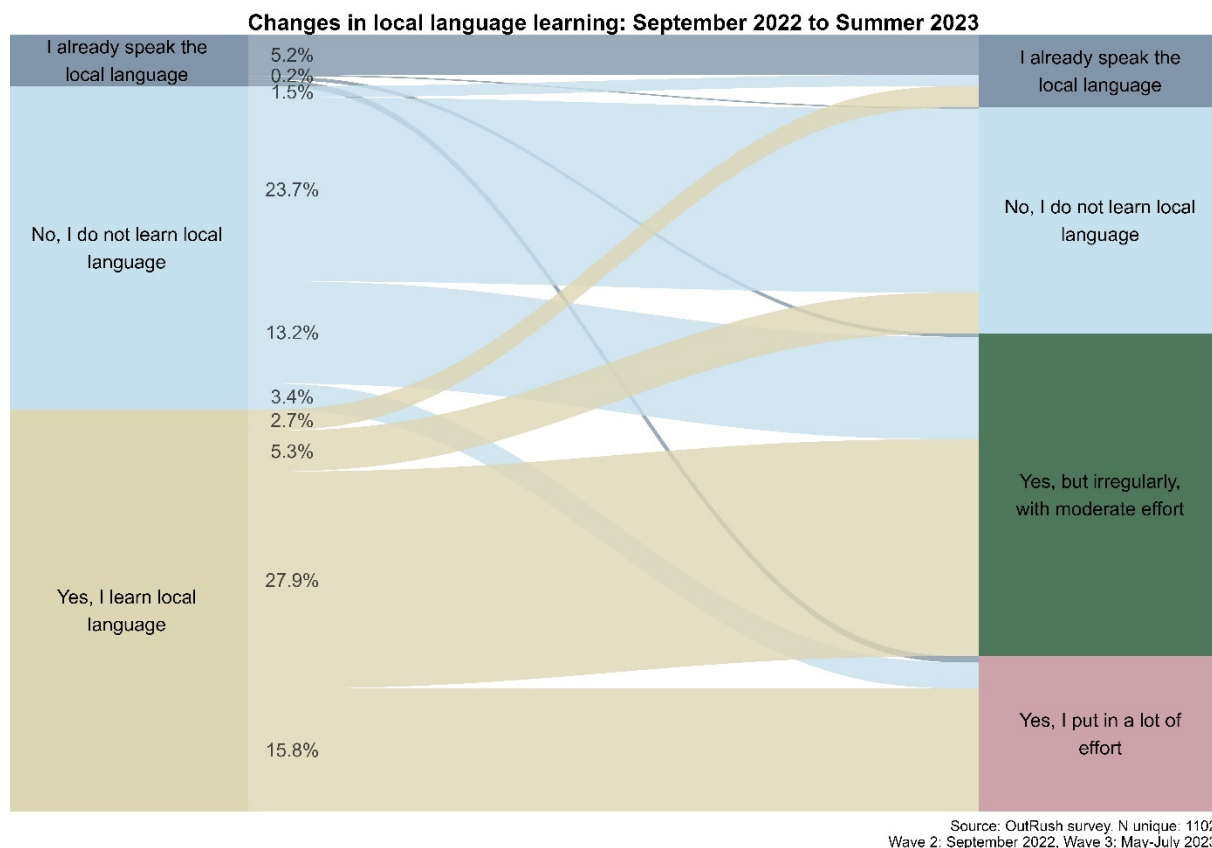


Figure 14. Changes in local language learning from September 2022 to Summer 2023. Graph based on panel sample: on responses from those who participated in two waves of the OutRush survey

Since September 2022, the number of migrants who are currently learning the local language or are already fluent in local languages has increased—more than half of the respondents are engaged in language learning (see **Figure 14**). However, due to various circumstances, not everyone can afford to devote themselves to full-time language learning, and more than a half of learning languages tend to study irregularly, whenever they have the time and energy. The situation is further complicated by the fact that in some countries where Russian migrants reside, the languages are highly complex (Georgian and Turkish are sometimes considered among the most [challenging](#) languages in the world) and demand a significant long-term commitment, which is not always feasible in precarious migrant situations. Naturally, the desire to learn the language can be influenced by various factors, such as the overall desire for integration, as well as the ability to manage daily life without knowing the local language. Interestingly, only 5% of those who stated in September 2022 that they were learning the local language have completely stopped their language learning efforts. In summary, about a quarter of migrants either already speak the local language or are putting in substantial effort to do so, and another quarter are learning the local language irregularly.

### 3. Connection with Russia, Russian community and political activism in exile

Key points:

- Despite the severing of economic ties, **social connections to Russia remain very strong** and show no sharp changes, staying stable even after a year and a half.
- Russian migrants **remain emotionally attached to Russia**, continue to be extremely interested in Russian politics and continue to be the source of information for Russians at home.
- They continue to be **civically active and participate in the social life** of their host countries through volunteering, donating to NGOs, or helping others.
- **Political activism, however, shows a downward trend**, particularly in highly visible and traceable forms such as donations to Russian NGOs and digital activism.
- This decline in political activism is accompanied by a **significant increase in fears of transnational repression**: between September 2022 and June 2023, the fear of repression from the Russian government increased by a concerning 17%. **The majority of migrants (up to 80%)** are afraid of persecution by Russian authorities, even while abroad.

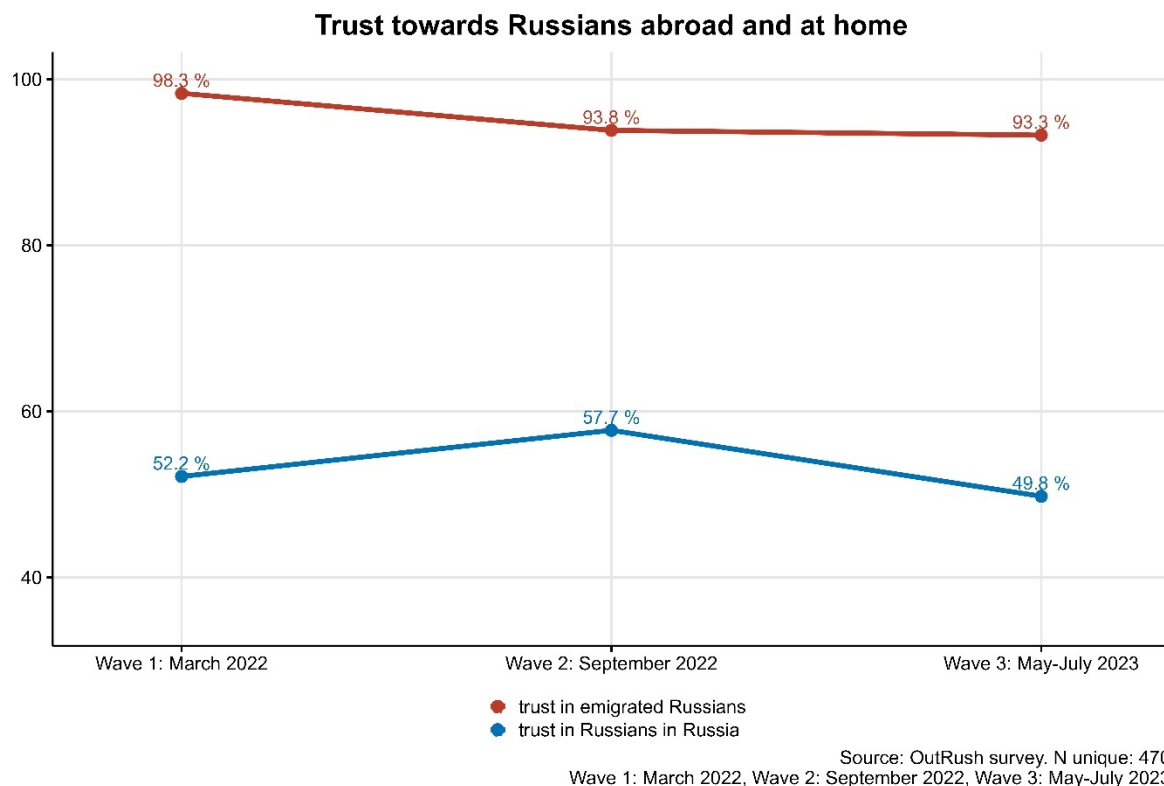
#### *Social ties to Russian community*

A key characteristic of this wave of emigration is the sustained and even increasing level of trust towards others, including fellow migrants and people in host societies, over one and a half years. The most noticeable aspect is the restoration and slight growth of generalized trust, or trust in people at large, which has steadily risen from 55% in the spring of 2022 to 69% by the summer of 2023.

Trust in other Russian migrants remains remarkably high at 93%, despite a 5% decrease since March 2022 (see **Figure 15**). The level of trust in those who have stayed in Russia has remained unchanged over the past one and a half years, standing at 50%, despite a slight increase in September 2022. This level of trust towards Russians who stayed at home, though much lower than that towards their migrant counterparts, can still be considered quite high. This finding does not confirm the messages about strong polarization between Russian migrants and Russians who stayed home.

Russian migrants continue to be extremely interested in Russian politics. Based on the responses from regular participants, over 90% showed an interest in Russian politics during the first month after emigrating, with this interest level remaining consistent at both the six-month and one-and-a-

half-year marks of migration period (see **Figure 16**). Despite the time spent in emigration, about 43% of respondents maintain a solid emotional attachment to Russia (scoring 4 and 5 on a 5-point scale of emotional attachment). We also observe that maintaining emotional and social ties with Russia does not contradict the growing connections with the host societies (see **section 2** of this memo).



*Figure 15. Changes in trust towards Russians abroad and in Russia from March 2022 to Summer 2023. Graph based on panel sample: on responses from those who participated in all three waves of the OutRush survey*

Equally important, emotional bonds and political interests are also accompanied by direct practices of communication with people in Russia. Russian migrants continue to be a strong resource for increasing political awareness of Russians back home. Despite a slight decrease since September 2022, in 2023, nearly 90% of Russians regularly speak with friends and relatives in Russia (at least several times a month). Furthermore, 50% of migrants often or always discuss politics in their conversations. Proportion of those having political discussions with relative in Russia has decreased by 6% since September 2022, which may indicate increased busyness or avoidance of difficult conversations.



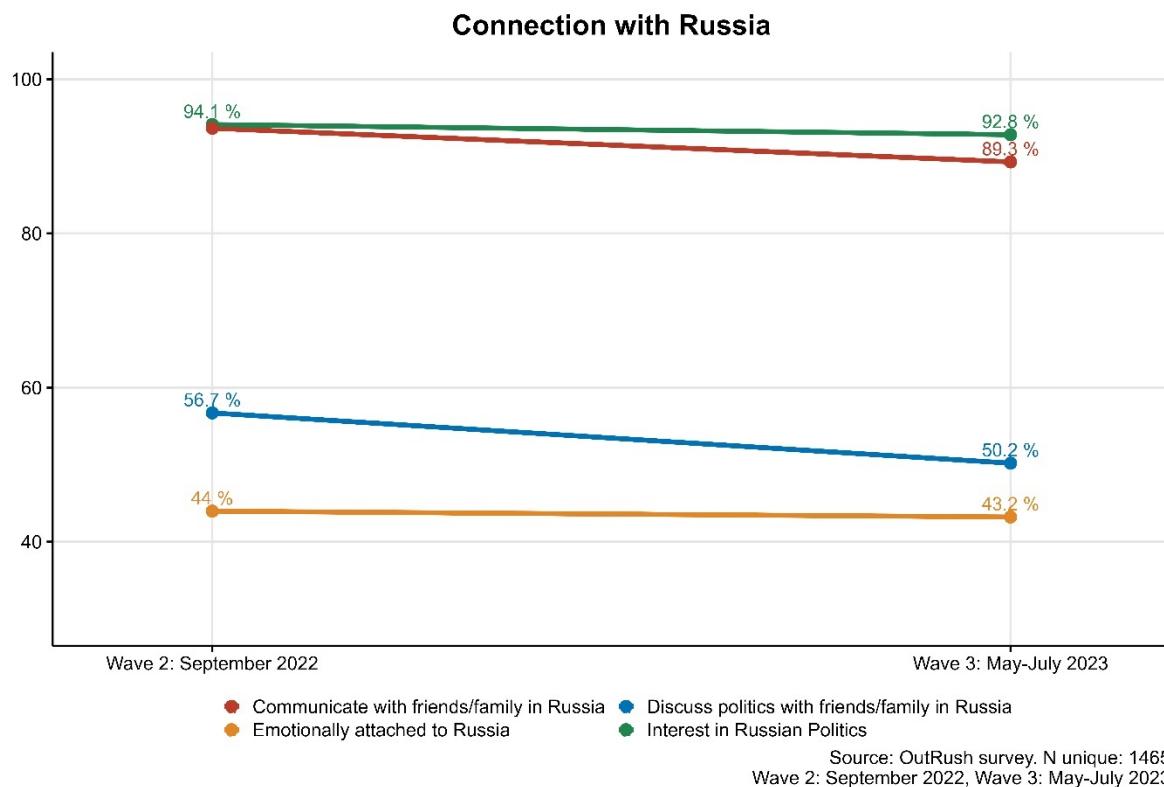


Figure 16. Changes in connections with Russia measured as talks with family and friends, emotional attachment, and political interests. Graph based on panel sample: on responses from those who participated in all three waves of the OutRush survey

The situation in the country of origin is one of the most important predictors of the desire of migrants and refugees to return home. Among our panelists, the proportion of those who believe that the situation in Russia will improve in the next few years continues to be low, with only 13% of people believing that the situation in Russia will change for the better soon. However, a slow growth in optimism towards Russia is noticeable: since September, the proportion of those who consider positive changes possible has increased from 9% in March 2022 to 14% by the summer of 2023. At the same time, our survey shows that the optimism of migrants regarding their own lives is growing rapidly: the proportion of those who believe that their life in the near future will be better increased from 23% in March 2022 to 76% in the summer of 2023. Thus, the subjective position of migrants in host countries is getting better over time.

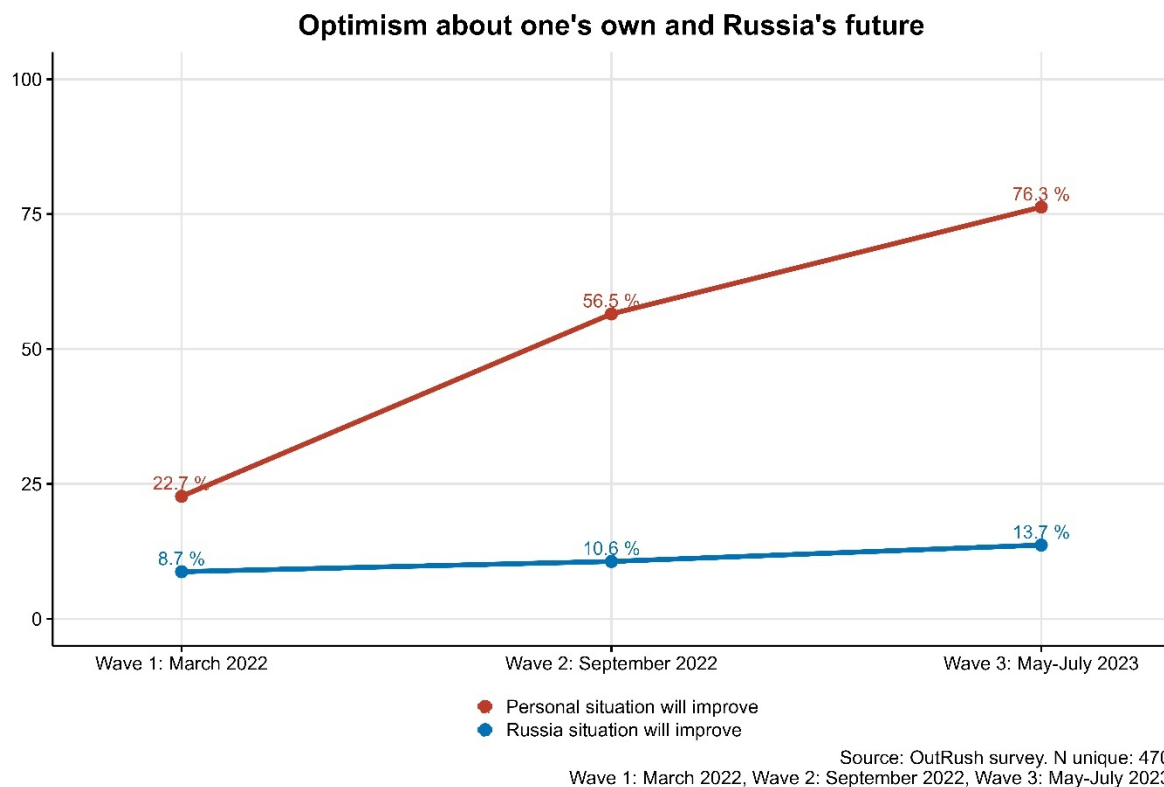


Figure 17. Changes in the level of optimism regarding one's own life and the overall situation in Russia. Graph based on panel sample: on responses from those who participated in all three waves of the OutRush survey

## Political and civic activities

Russian migrants continue to **be active volunteers** a year and a half after emigration, displaying neither a clear upward nor downward trend in this activity. As of Summer 2023, the proportion of migrants volunteering remains unchanged from the initial 16% in March 2022 (see **Figure 18**). The percentage helping Ukrainian refugees slightly rose to 38% in Summer 2023, compared to 34% in March 2022, after 1.5 years. Similarly, while Russian migrants continue to support local NGOs financially, this proportion declined from 11% in September 2022 to 8% in Summer 2023.

The temporary surge in civic activism observed in September 2022 can likely be attributed to heightened politicization of migrants during Russia's military mobilization or efforts to support Ukraine in preparing for the winter season. The proportion of migrants assisting other Russian exiles fell from initial 38% to 25%. We do not consider this decline as indicative of diminishing solidarity among Russian migrants, as trust levels within this group remain very high. Instead, the decrease can be partially attributed to a lower demand for assistance, due to a combination of factors including the slowdown in migration flow, effective adaptation of migrants who arrived earlier, and improved incomes among the less affluent migrants (hence decreased need for help).

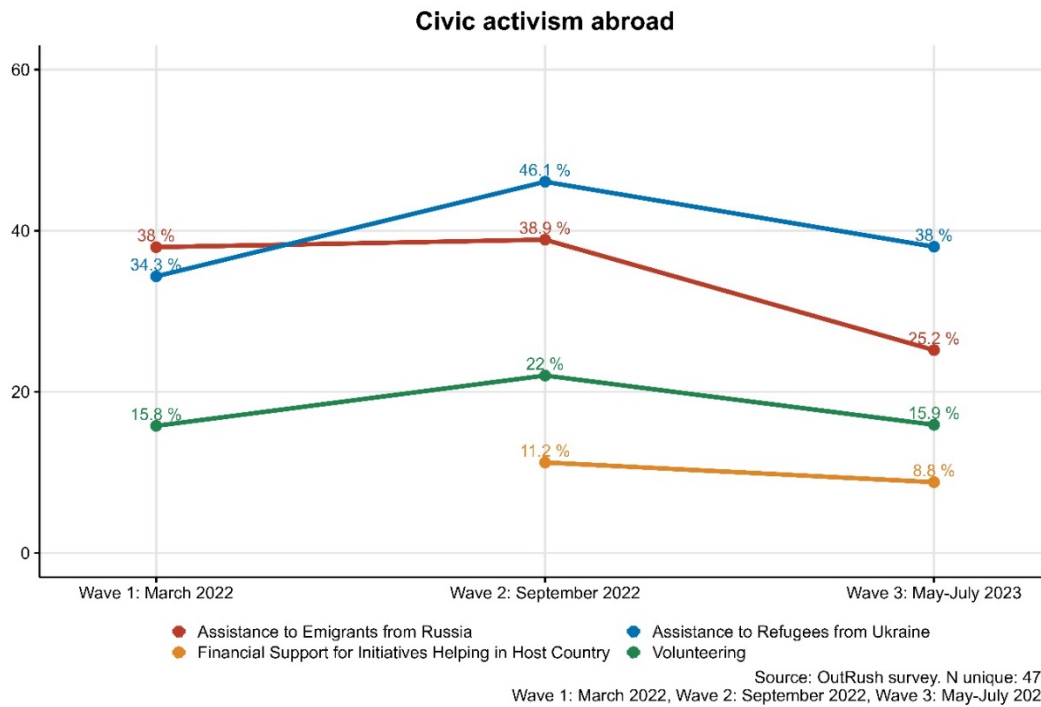


Figure 18. Changes in civic engagement from March 2022 to Summer 2023. Graph based on panel sample: on responses from those who participated in all three waves of the OutRush survey

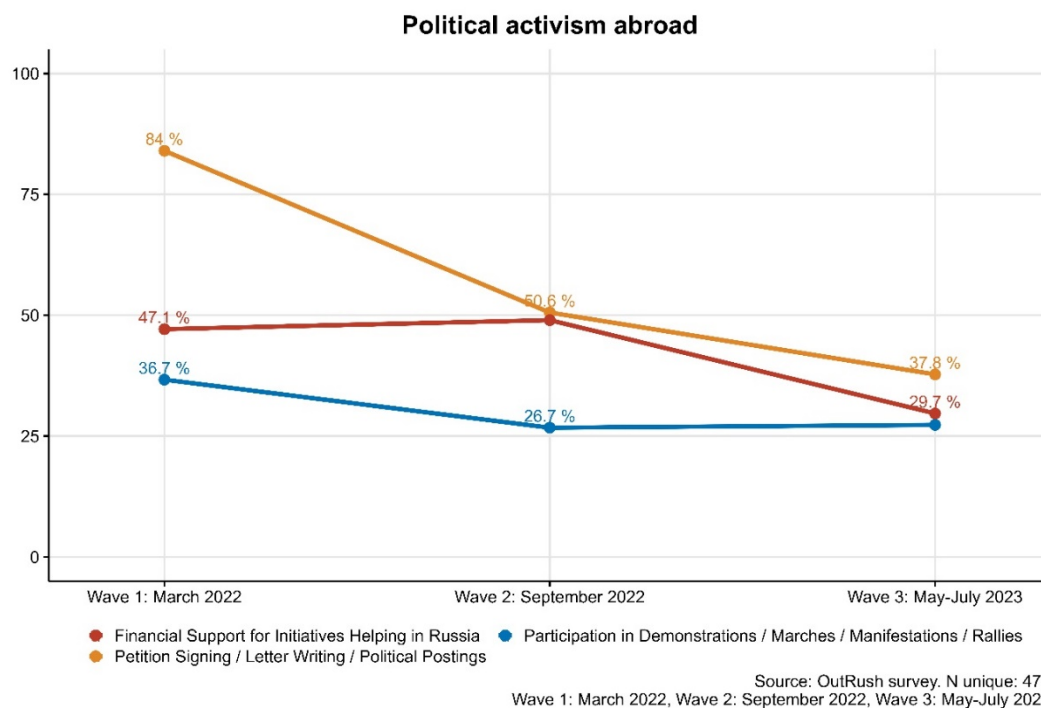


Figure 19. Changes in political engagement from March 2022 to Summer 2023. Graph based on panel sample: on responses from those who participated in all three waves of the OutRush survey

Migration allows Russian migrants to participate in the activities that are high-risk in Russia. Many migrants not only post independent information on social networks, but participate in anti-war protests. Here is how one of the informants in Turkey describes her first experience of participating in a pro-Ukraine rally in Istanbul:

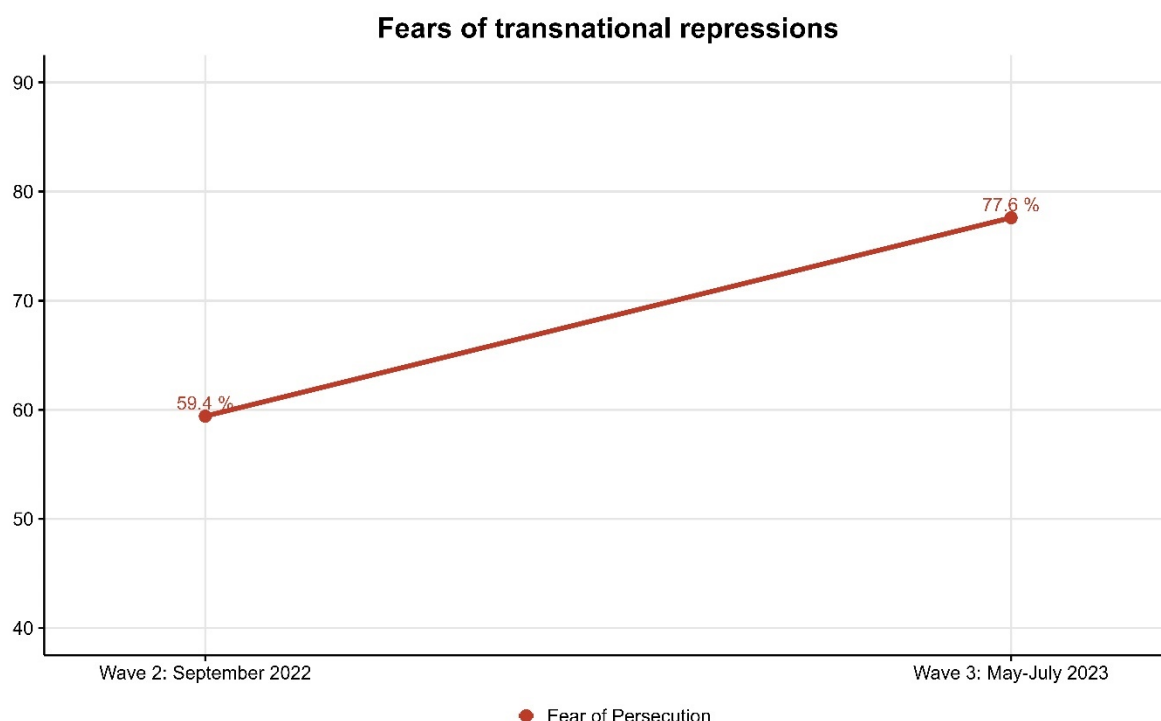
*"I remember that I went to one rally in Istanbul. It was a Ukrainian rally, but I shamelessly ended up there and just stood. It was right in March, at the very beginning, I remember that at that time it was surprising for me that the guys — the policemen — were standing nearby, smiling, laughing, and on the contrary, protecting this group of protesters — it was a complete delight, and there I passionately yelled "Russian ship go f..k yourself!" despite the fact that there were few Russians around me, mostly Ukrainians. That's more of the feeling, but there was a heartfelt impulse, I really wanted to do that."*  
(30 years old, woman, Turkey)

**In general, however, political engagement among Russian migrants shows a decreasing trend.** Digital activism, which includes activities such as signing petitions, writing open letters, and posting political messages on social media, has experienced the most significant decline. The proportion of Russian migrants engaged in digital activism dropped sharply from 84% in March 2022 to 38% in Summer 2023 (see [Figure 19](#)). Similarly, but to a lesser extent, the percentage of Russian migrants who donated money to NGOs operating in Russia decreased from 47% in March 2022 to 30% in September 2023. The trend for participation in rallies and demonstrations is slightly different. After a decline in September 2022, the proportion of Russians reporting participation in rallies or demonstrations in the three months prior to the survey stabilized at 29% in Summer 2023.

**The decline in political activism among Russian exiles could be attributed to heightened fear of repressions, integration processes, problem fatigue, and weakened ties to Russia.** First, the level of repression has dramatically increased in Russia ([1,2,3](#)), rendering highly visible and traceable forms of dissent, such as donations to Russian NGOs and digital activism, risky even for exiles. This is compounded by the growing fear among Russian migrants of transnational repression (refer to the [subsequent section](#) for more details). Secondly, with the military conflict in its prolonged stage, Russian migrants may experience what is known as "[compassion fatigue](#)" — a desire to withdraw from helping others due to emotional exhaustion and burnout. Third, the new challenges of integrating into local economies and societies also require time and effort, potentially conflicting with high levels of politicization. Lastly, some migrants might lose their connection and attachment to Russia, leading to reduced participation in Russia-related activities, though our data suggest that this is not a widespread phenomenon.

## Fear of repressions

Transnational repression is a complex tool for political control, used by states to suppress dissent beyond their borders. Common tactics include surveillance, wiretapping, border control measures, monitoring migrants' activities abroad, forced returns, and harm to migrants' relatives.



Source: OutRush survey. N unique: 1465  
Wave 2: September 2022, Wave 3: May-July 2023

Figure 20. Changes in fears of transnational repressions from the Russian government. Graph based on panel sample: on responses from those who participated in the second and third waves of the OutRush survey

Between September 2022 and June 2023, the fear of repression from the Russian government increased by a concerning 17%, with 78% of OutRush panelists indicating that they were either somewhat or very afraid of repression from the Russian government as of summer 2023 (see **Figure 20**). This rise can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, the response of Russian officials towards exiles (in the last year, Dmitry Medvedev and State Duma Chairman Vyacheslav Volodin, made intimidating statements towards exiles, suggesting extreme measures such as employing [death squads](#) and sending exiles to [labor camps](#)). Human rights advocates and independent media reported numerous cases of persecution of Russian migrants for their anti-war stance, including in-absentia prison sentences ([1,2,3,4](#)), property confiscation ([1](#)), issuing arrest warrants ([1,2](#)), and surveillance in cities with large Russian migrant populations ([1,2](#)). Secondly, the precarious position of many Russian migrants in host countries likely exacerbates their fear, as they worry about the necessity of returning to Russia due to financial or other difficulties.

Notably, the fear of repression from Russia remains high across migrants in nearly all popular destination countries, suggesting that migrants are concerned about repression regardless of their current host country. The highest levels of fear of repression from the Russian government are among migrants in Kazakhstan, Turkey, Armenia, Georgia, and Germany, where 69–77% of respondents reported fear of repression (see **Figure 21**). These countries are closely followed by Serbia, where 65% of the respondents express similar fears. It is evident that Russian migrants feel susceptible to repression from the Russian government, regardless of their location.

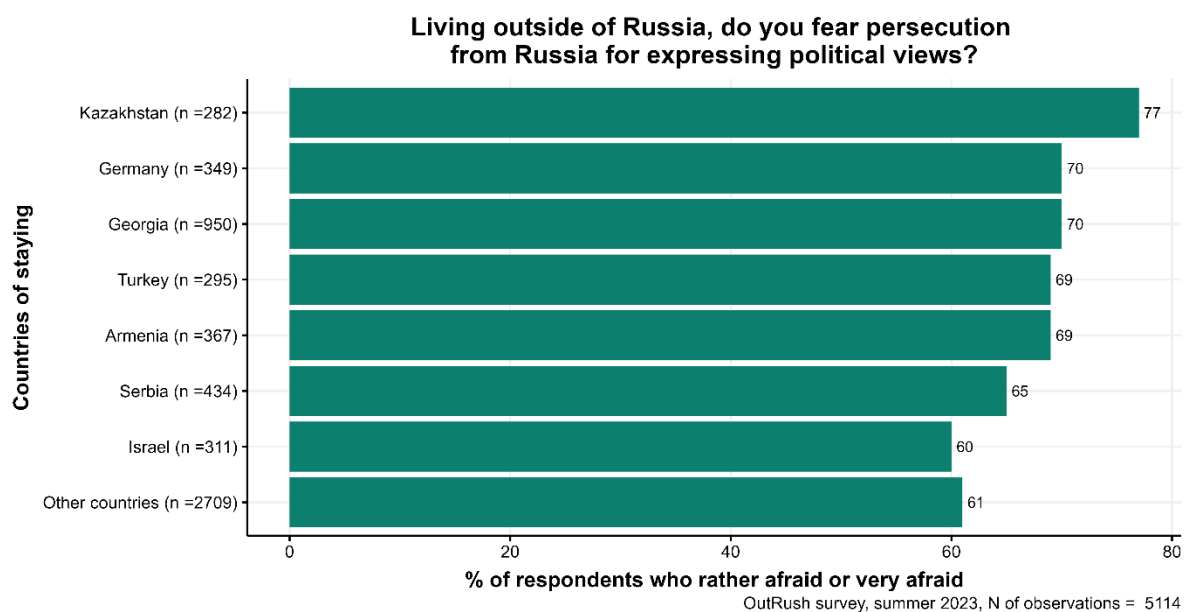


Figure 21. Country-specific prevalence rates of fears of transnational repression from the Russian government among Russian migrants. Graph based on combined sample: it includes regular and new respondents

Fear of transnational repression may extend beyond personal safety concerns to include fears for relatives remaining in Russia:

*"I have concerns that our relatives who remain in Russia might be targeted, as all of our parents are still there. They have already been called in for questioning, invited for interviews. That is, I fear persecution against our family members, our relatives. Well, and also here in Tbilisi, we know there exists a network of agents. There are many people who, under the guise of being ordinary individuals, infiltrate companies to gather information. There have been instances where such individuals have been exposed."*  
(29 years old, man, Georgia)

Based on the levels of fear regarding host country governments, it seems Russian migrants are concerned that the Russian government might exert its influence through repressions enacted by the governments of their host countries. This is especially apparent in Kazakhstan, where 55%

of respondents fear repression from local authorities, as illustrated in **Figure 22**. To a lesser degree, this concern is also relevant in Georgia and Turkey, where a third of migrants share this fear. During our interviews, informants repeatedly mentioned their awareness that certain countries are obligated to extradite migrants at the request of the Russian government.

*“Turkey, in our view, is not a safe country for us. First, the regime here is also authoritarian. Second, Turkey has an extradition agreement upon request [with Russia]. There have been no such prominent precedents, no one has been extradited, but it's all legally described and possible. This also causes some concern. So, in Turkey, people feel more anxious.”*  
(50 years old, man, Turkey)

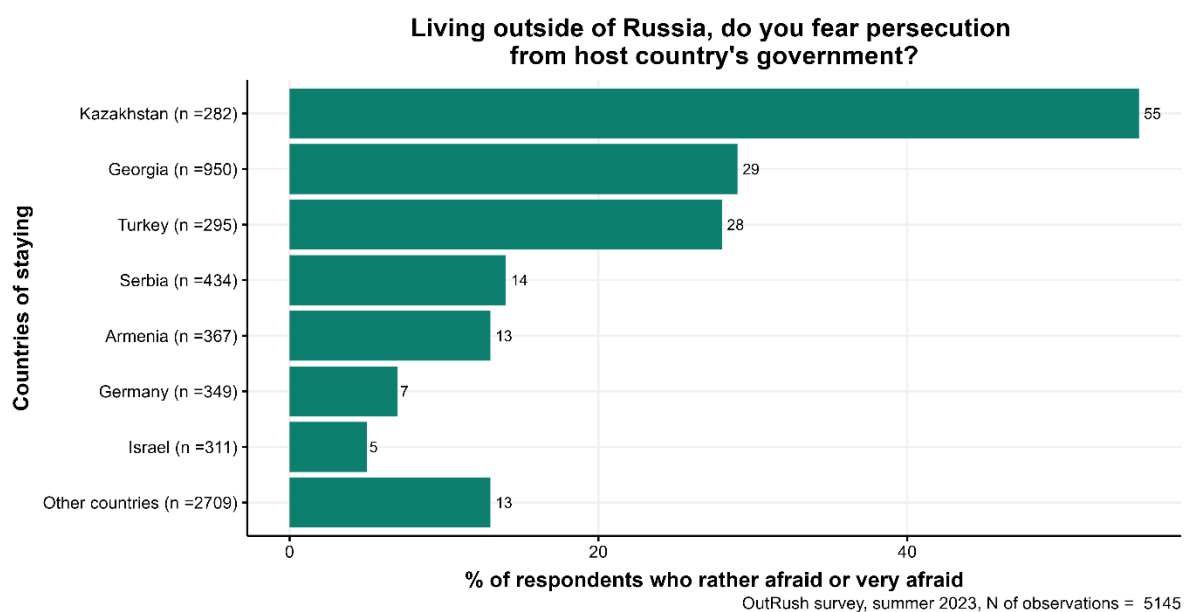


Figure 22. Country-specific prevalence rates of fears of repression from the host country's government among Russian migrants. Graph based on combined sample: it includes regular and new respondents

In Georgia, there have been multiple instances where politically active migrants, after traveling abroad, were prohibited from returning. Russian migrants also do not feel safe in Armenia, as well as in many other former Soviet Union countries ([1,2,3](#)). Additionally, media reports suggest that the Russian government has legal agreements with the governments of Kazakhstan, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. These agreements reportedly obligate these governments to comply with requests from the Russian government and security services, including the deportation of Russian migrants back to Russia ([1,2,3](#)).

How does repression affect the integration of Russian migrants? Repression is known to detrimentally impact diasporas, instilling fear and suspicion among members ([1,2](#)). This can lead to the frag-

mentation of the diaspora, impeding its political mobilization and solidarity. Furthermore, for Russian migrants, the fear of repression is strongly linked to a decline in overall well-being, which may, in turn, hinder their integration into host societies.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, repression can sometimes have the unintended effect of strengthening community bonds and solidarity, based on shared identities. Additionally, for some migrants, the fear of repression can be a mobilizing force, encouraging integration into host societies and cutting ties with Russia. One informant in Turkey expressed how the risk of repression from the Russian government motivates him:

*"These threats push me to be more active, work harder, and make more open and assertive statements. I always speak under my own name and don't resort to anonymity. Contrarily, it acts as a catalyst, as there's no longer an option of returning."*  
(50 years old, man, Turkey)

We posit that opportunities to integrate and establish a life within the host community facilitate this mobilizing effect. In general, the fear of repression is rather linked with decreased political activism.

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<sup>11</sup> We lay out evidence for this in Sergeeva, I., & Kamalov, E. (2023, December 23). You Can Leave The Autocracy, But Will The Autocracy Leave You? Subjective Well-being of Russian Political Migrants in 2022. <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/2wmuy>