

Free Russia Foundation

EXILED RUSSIANS

June 2022

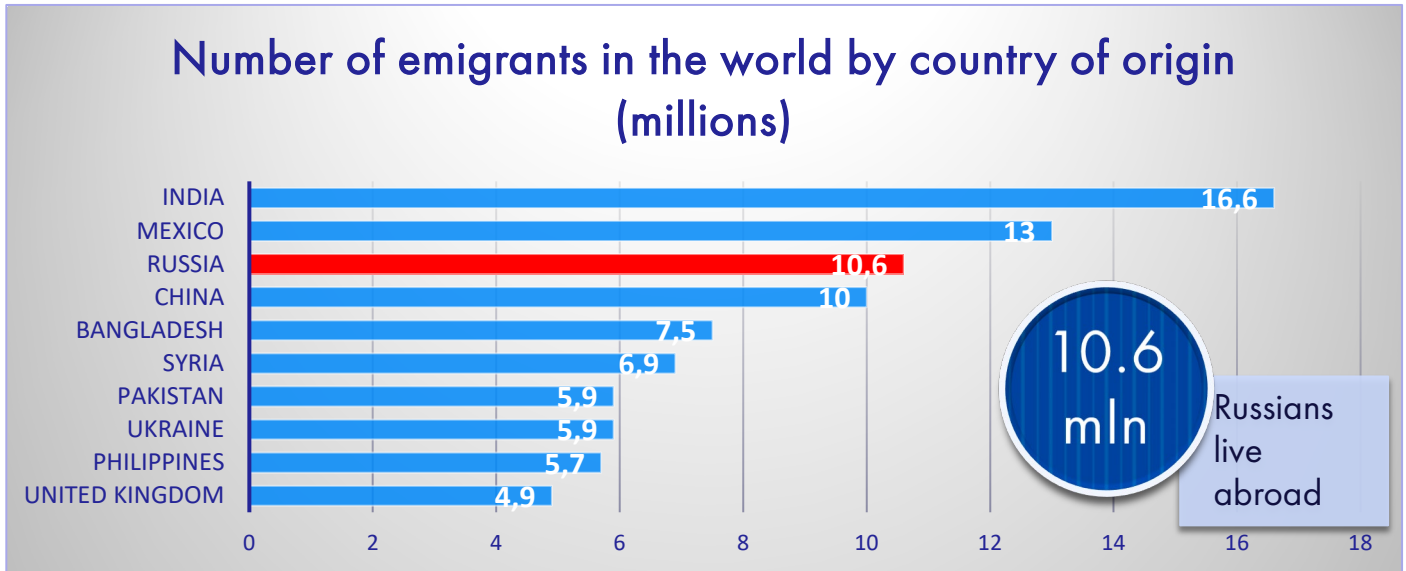


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I. Emigration 2011-2020

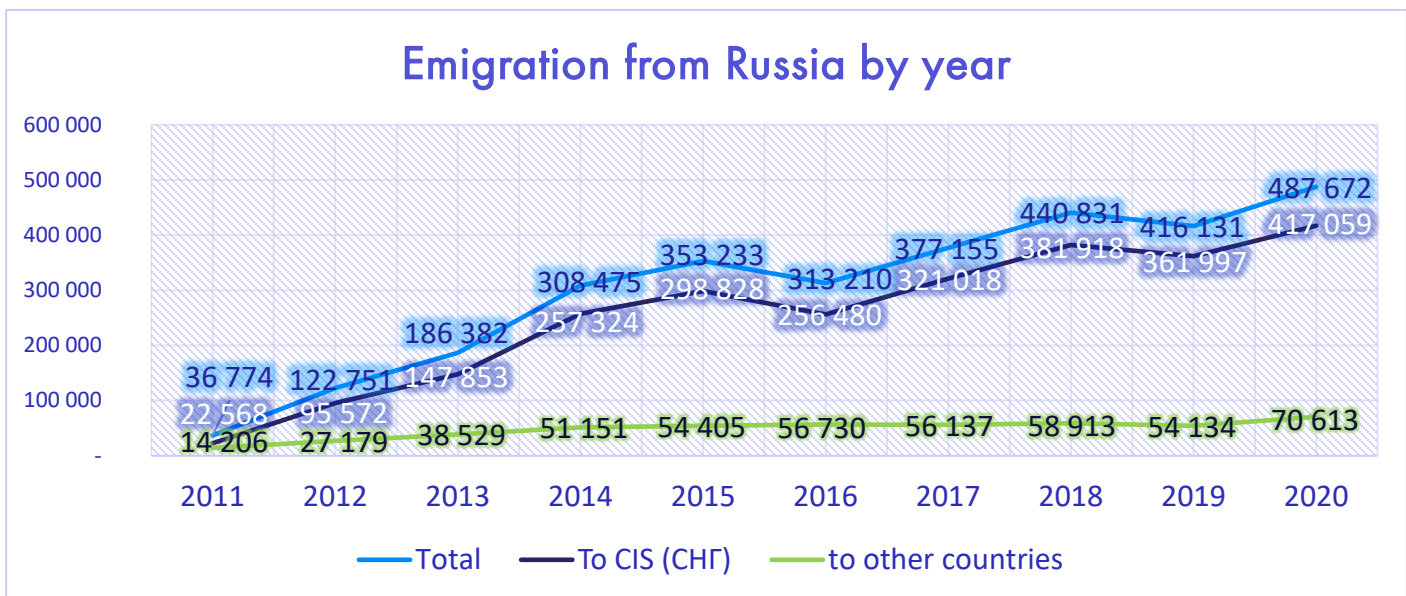
According to UN data, more than 10 million Russians live abroad. This is the world's third largest number after India and Mexico.



Current available data estimates the total number people who emigrated from the Russian Federation between 2000 and 2020 to be **four - five million people**.

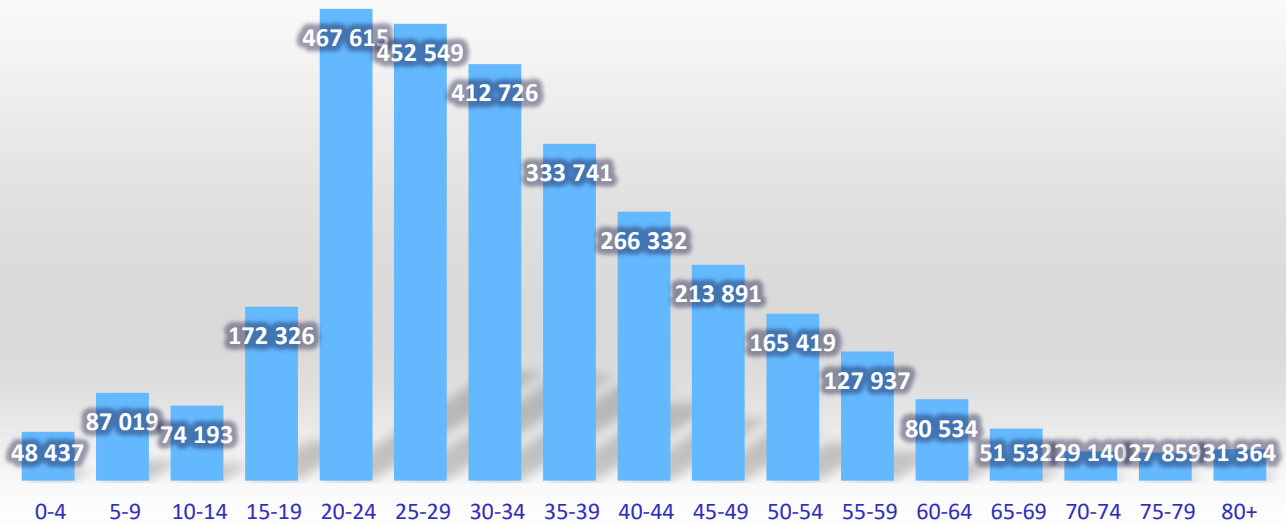


Minimal emigration occurred from 2006 to 2011, while in recent years, the country has been losing about **450,000 citizens annually**.

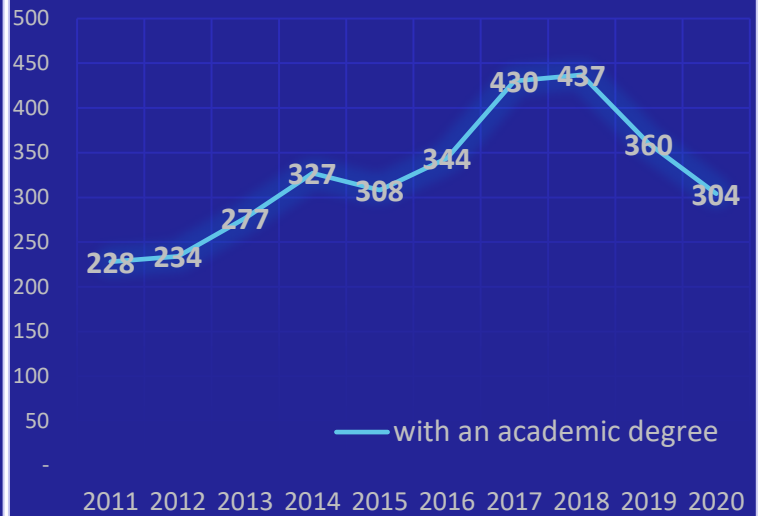
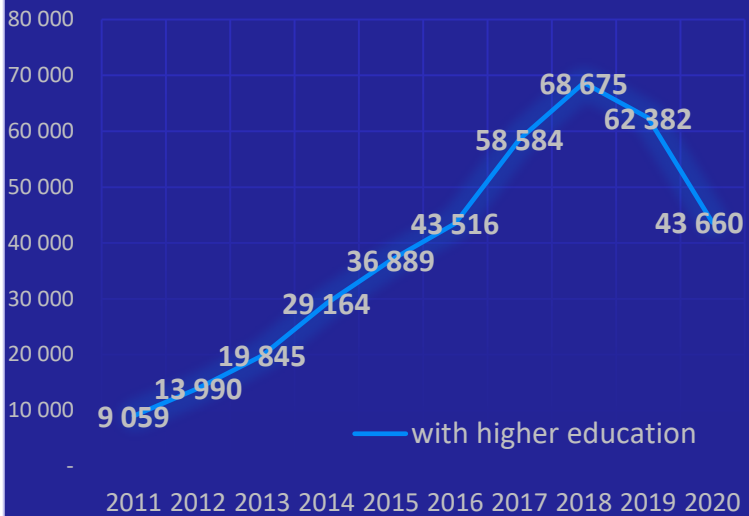


In the prime of their lives

Age distribution of Russian emigrants from 2011 to 2020



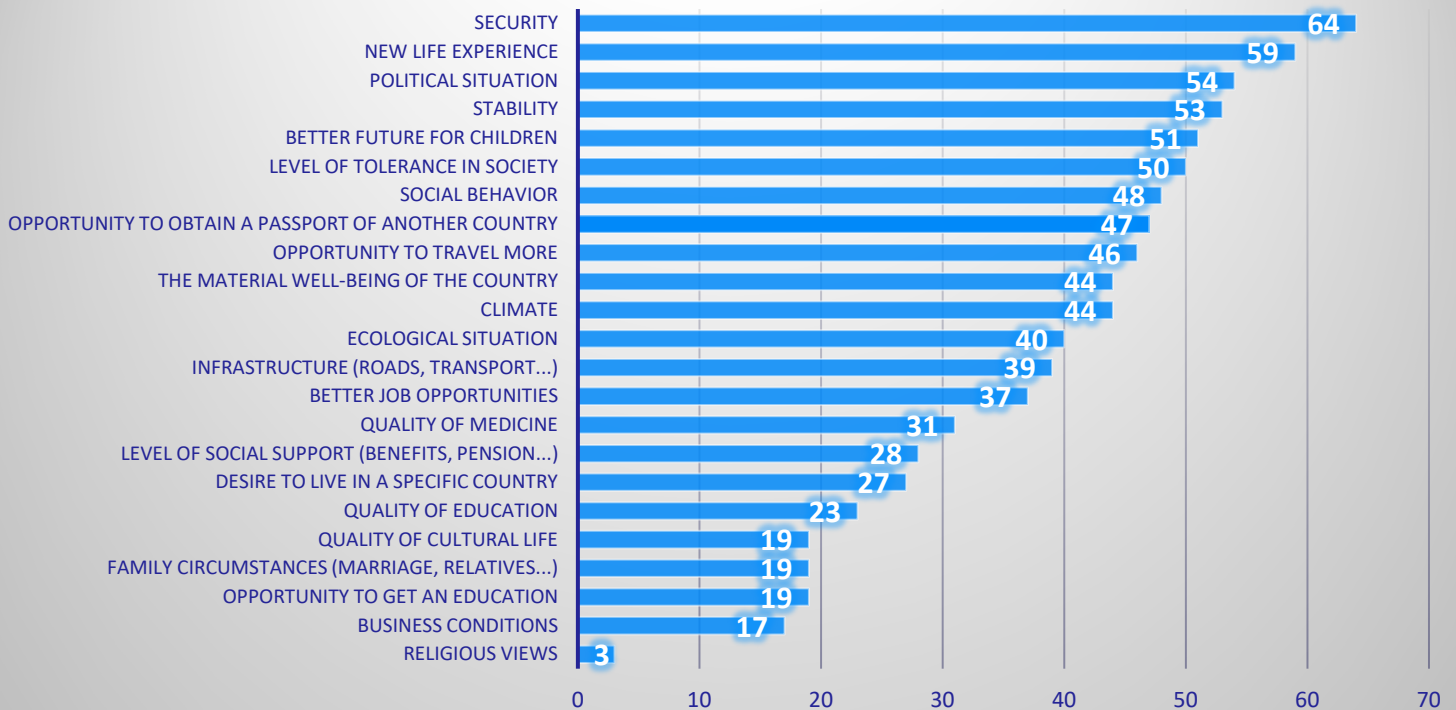
Russian emigrants with some college education or a college degree



In late 2021, media outlet Takie Dela interviewed **900** people who left Russia after 2000. **55%** of the respondents were between 30 and 40; **85%** were married (in an official or common law marriage), and half had children under the age of 18. **92%** of respondents were college-educated, and **14%** had college degrees. **One-third** were self-employed (freelancer, entrepreneur, company owner), and half were specialists in their fields.

Before relocating, half of those surveyed had lived in Moscow, 14% in St. Petersburg, and the rest from elsewhere in Russia. At the time of their move, they were between 20 and 40 years old, and only a quarter had children.

Main motivation for emigration



About half of those who left Russia between 2000 and 2020 left for safety reasons and were in search of a more just and open society. 80% of them left after 2012.

The other half of survey participants named family (15%), work (15%), and new experience (20%) as reasons for their move.

II. Emigration in 2022

1. Who left Russia because of the war in Ukraine

- **Method:** 2,067 people who left Russia because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in early 2022 were surveyed online. The link to the poll was distributed via chat rooms and social media community groups on relocation. The first poll was conducted on March 16, 2022, and later on, data was collected on a regular basis to track trends using a sample size of 1,500 respondents.¹ There were two studies completed by the non-profit Ok Russians² in April 2022. Some of the numbers are approximated.
- **Destinations by the numbers:** The most popular countries for emigrants polled were **Georgia, Turkey, and Armenia**—these countries received about one-third of the people leaving Russia. Due to the lack of data, it is difficult to quantify the rate of exodus. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia reported that 20,000 - 25,000 people fled Russia during the first week after the invasion of Ukraine. An estimated 300,000 Russians left the country by the end of March 2022 based on the above data and the Ok Russians survey results, which found that 15% of people went to Georgia.

At least **300k**
left Russia

34% were IT
specialists

57% were
under 35 years old

68% quit their
jobs suddenly

57% still had
an income in Russia

49% had
enough money for 3
months

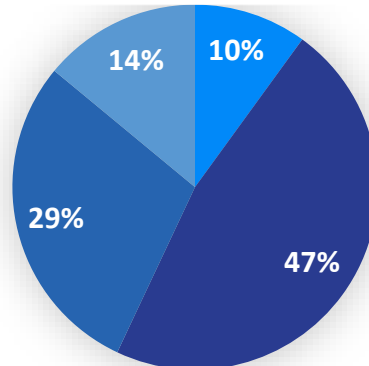
¹ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1f_oUj0GbXluj0Osj_vXfTXs-nFN7IIVW/view

² <https://www.facebook.com/OKRussians>



- Who:** Most respondents were IT specialists (34%) or managers (33%). The remaining third reported a wide variety of jobs, which mainly fell into the categories of office workers and creators (lawyers, psychologists, consultants, NGO employees, journalists, bloggers, designers, and so on).

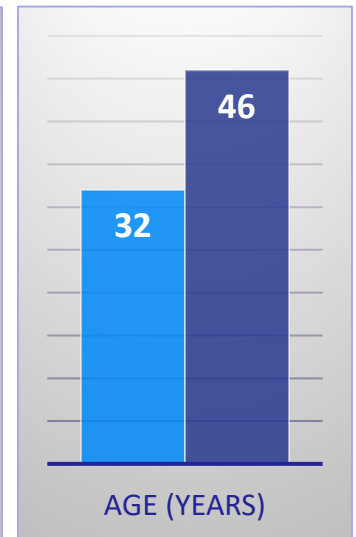
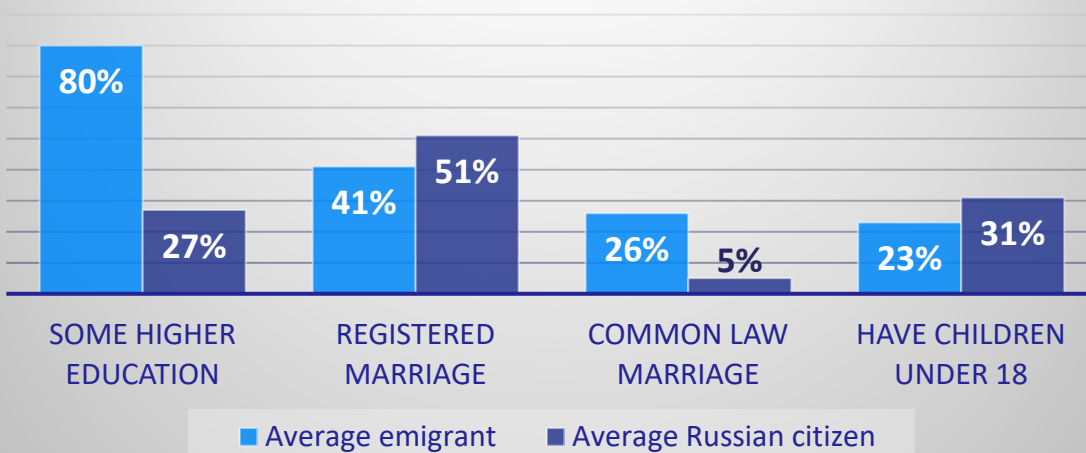
Most were young (25-35 years old), and only one-third had children.



Age of emigrants

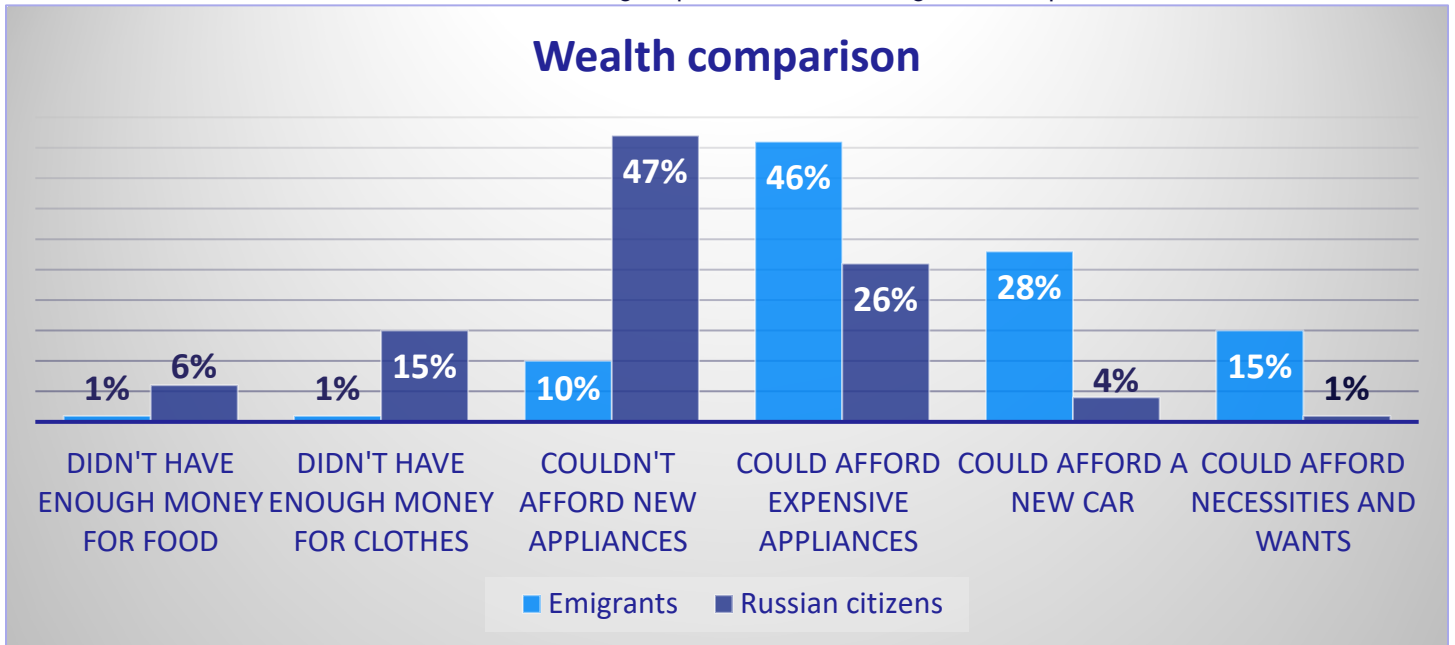


A comparison of the average emigrant and average Russian citizen

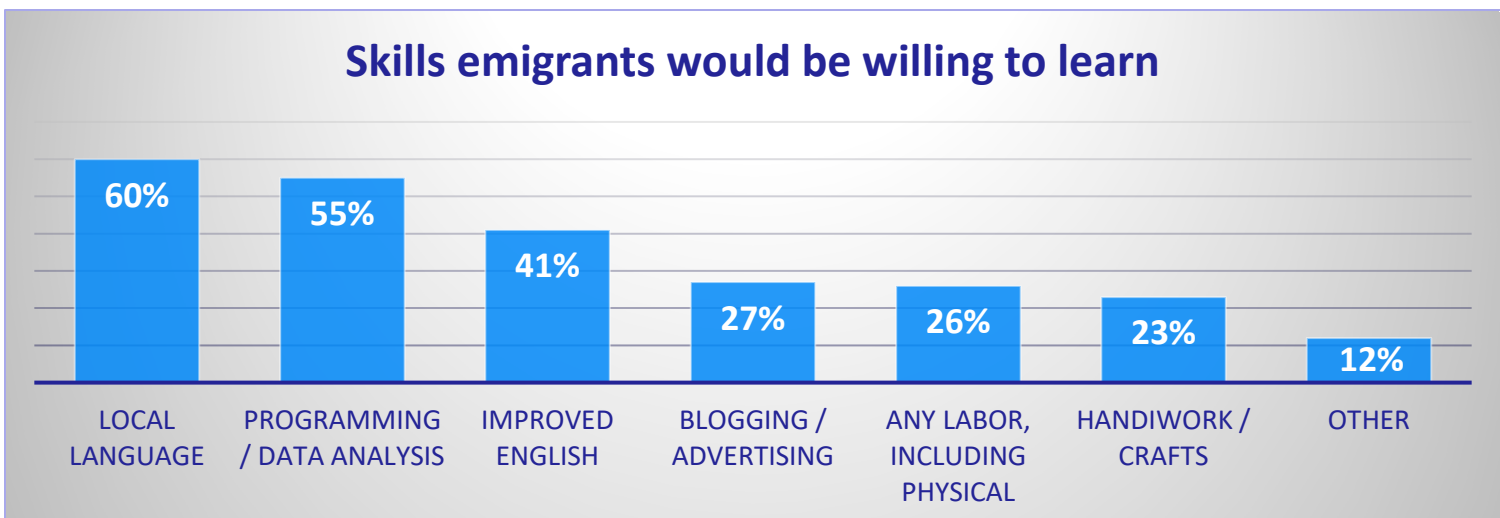




The differences in financial situations between those who left and those who stayed in Russia are especially noticeable. Before the start of the war, the two groups had the following financial positions:



Job prospects abroad



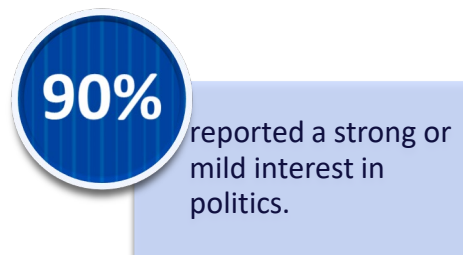


Foreign language proficiency



2. Interest in politics and repression in Russia

Most respondents were politically active in Russia. As a result, they were often persecuted for their beliefs.

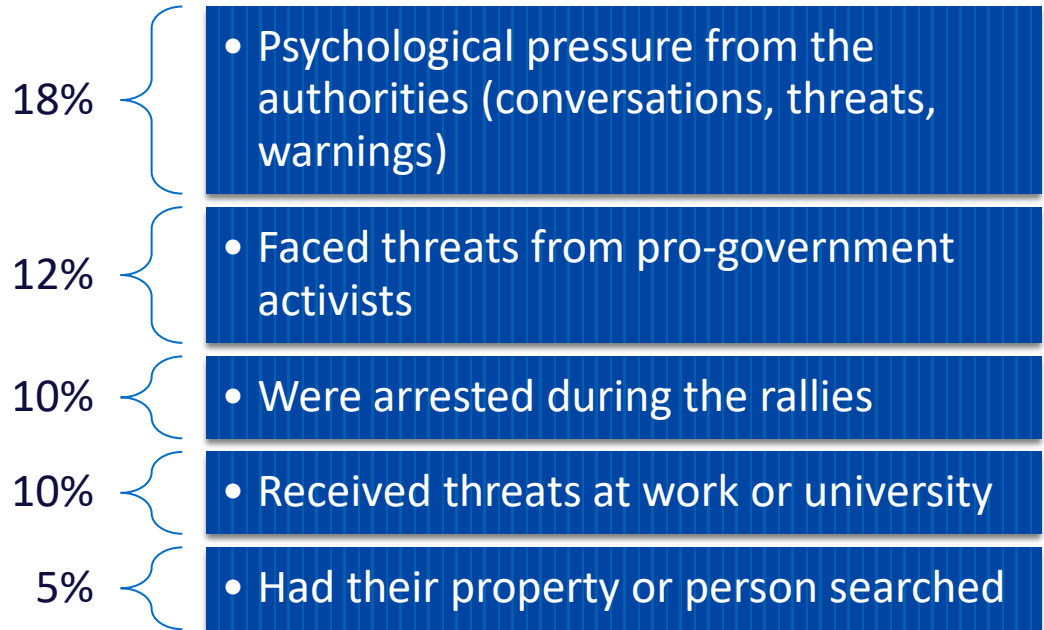


Political activism



Political pressure

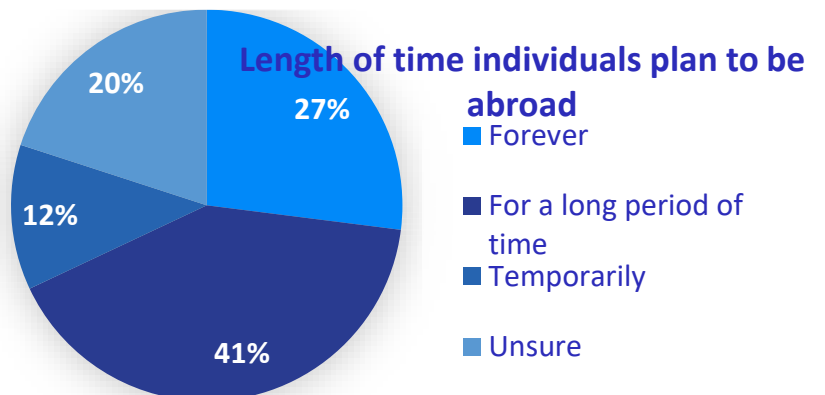
55%
of respondents faced some form of political pressure before leaving Russia



3. Reasons for emigrating

The large-scale emigration of Russian citizens during this time period was out of necessity and under duress rather than after careful planning. Many people had considered emigrating before the war, which gave them the final push to move. For many, the decision to move was an emotional one, and choosing where was a question of which countries were accepting immigrants. Countless individuals had their visas expire during the pandemic.

Majority of people reported they have left Russia for a long time or even forever, while only 12% considered the departure to be temporary.



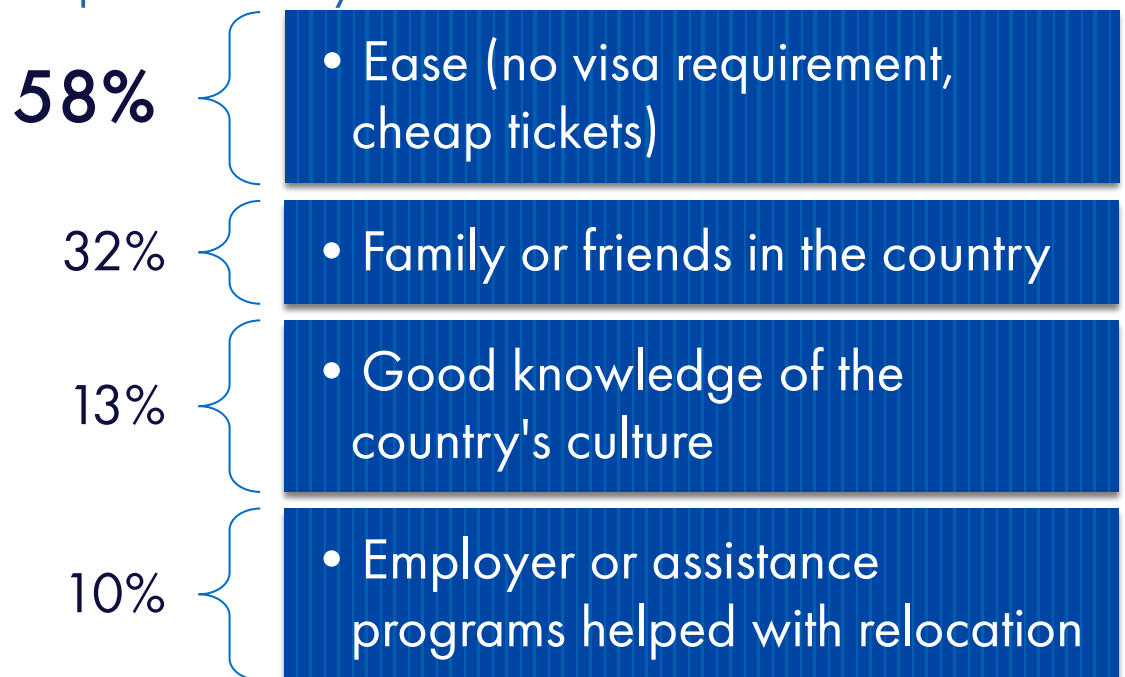


The six main reasons for leaving:

1. Disapproval of the war with Ukraine	Unwillingness to live in an aggressor country and being complicit in the war (by staying silent, supporting the invasion financially through paying taxes, getting drafted to fight)
2. Fear of repressions	Fear of being persecuted, fired from work, or expelled from university for political reasons; administrative and criminal cases have been brought against some respondents
3. Difficulties at work	Job loss, employer leaving the Russian market (including the relocation of employees), the inability to cooperate and exchange money with foreign clients
4. Living standards	Inability to lead a normal life, use familiar goods and services, or travel
5. Bleak future	Lack of prospects (economic, political, cultural) and fear for the future of children
6. Alienation	Feeling superfluous or out of place among people who support the current regime; the feeling of being in the minority and unable to influence the situation

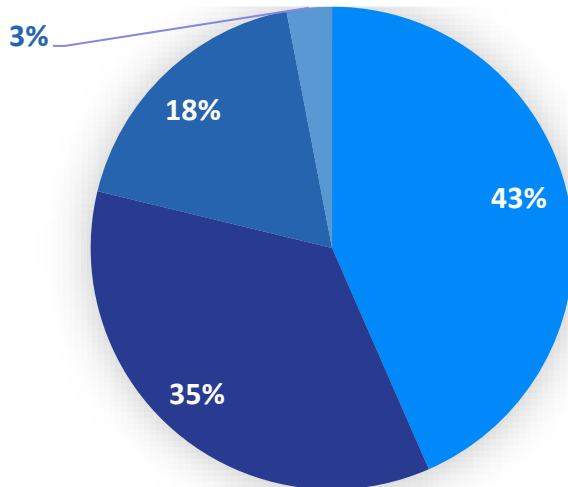
3. Life in a new country

Reason for moving to a particular country





Plans for the next 3 months



- Stay in host country
- No clear plans, waiting for the situation to develop
- Move to another country
- Return to Russia

Medical needs

58%

- No special medical needs

25%

- Medications required (including prescriptions)

21%

- Require medical observation or diagnosis

3%

- Require urgent medical treatment

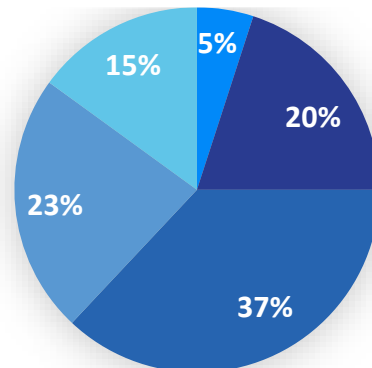
3%

- Require ongoing medical care

4. Difficulties

Most respondents were unprepared for their departure.

Only a quarter of those who left expressed confidence in their new situation.

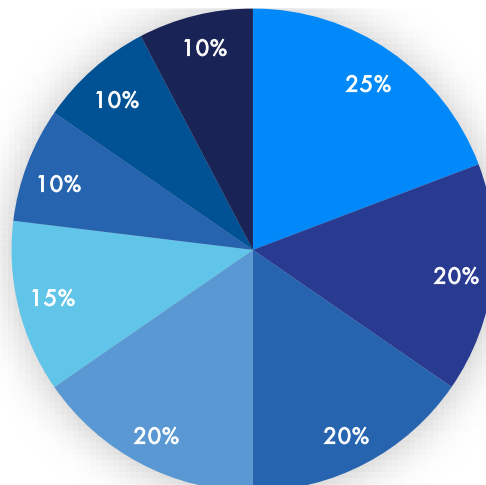


Feeling of confidence

- Very confident
- Rather confident
- Confident to some extent
- Rather uncertain
- Completely unsure

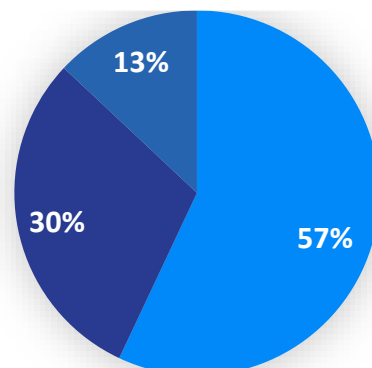
Financial difficulties

People reported facing a variety of financial problems: accessing savings and salaries in accounts in Russia (credit and debit cards may not function abroad), finding a new job, the high cost of living in a new place, the low exchange rate of the ruble. Many people were not prepared to move financially or morally.



- Access to money in accounts in Russia
- Job search
- Fluctuations in value of the ruble
- Status in the country of residence (visa, residence permit, etc.)
- Finding and paying for housing
- Discrimination against Russians
- Relationships with relatives in Russia
- Personal psychological difficulties

Most people reported a dependence on sources of income in Russia.

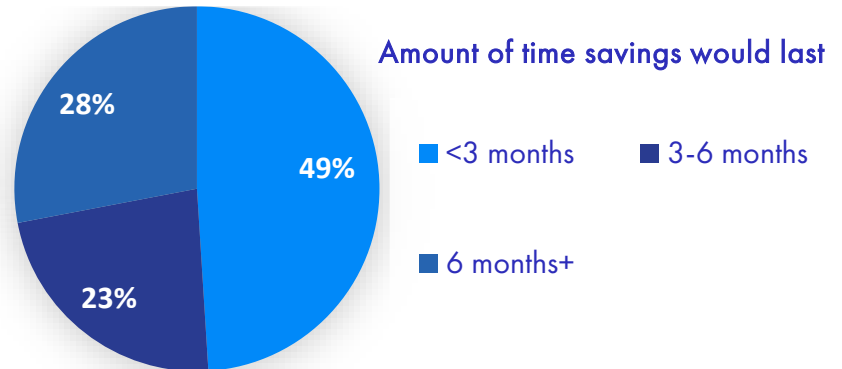


Source of income

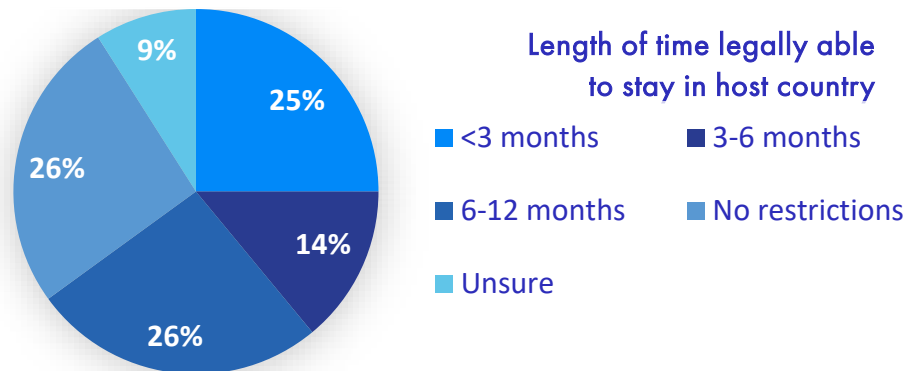
- In Russia
- Outside Russia
- Both in and outside Russia, approximately equally



Most of those polled had insubstantial savings—only enough for a few months in the case of income loss.



One in five had trouble obtaining or renewing their legal status in the host country. This may have been a result of having to obtain documents from Russia. Only a quarter reported having no restrictions on the length of their stay in the host country.



Accommodation

- Due to the increased demand (especially in visa-free countries), it has been extremely difficult to find any kind of apartment or house. The inflation of rental prices, in addition to the decrease in the value of the ruble, has made the cost of living higher than average.

General Uncertainty

- Many people who fled Russia have been dealing with general uncertainty in their lives, even in the short-term, as well as discrimination from locals in their new country of residence or acquaintances from Ukraine. People may have been experiencing conflict with relatives due to different perspectives of the ongoing war, anxiety for relatives and friends still in Russia, and isolation from their community.

V. Emotions and fears

The 2022 wave of emigration has been colored by emotions and spontaneity. People reported experiencing a vast range of emotions from shock, sadness, and longing to relief and even hope.

1. ANXIETY, CONFUSION, FRUSTRATION

Many do not have plans for the near future—they left when they could, not fully understanding how to continue their lives. They may have a lot of questions and tasks: where to live, how to earn money, how to obtain documents, how to arrange schooling for children, etc.

2. FEAR

Respondents expressed great uncertainty and fear for the future of their relatives and friends who remained in Russia for their safety, financial well-being, or health, as well as the thought of not being able to see their loved ones again.

3. SADNESS, LONGING, NOSTALGIA

It was very difficult for people to leave their homes and their comfortable, interesting, rich, and well-organized lives. Respondents felt that they were forced to leave everything they loved behind. This has caused great sadness and heartache. They miss home and their everyday lives. Some dream of returning home as soon as possible and doubt their decision to leave.

4. ANGER

Together with longing and sadness about the forced departure, the respondents admitted to being angry at Putin's regime, which ruined their way of life and future and forced them to face unexpected difficulties.

5. SHAME AND GUILT

Some respondents voiced strong feelings of guilt. "I am ashamed of my country, which became an aggressor and unleashed a war." They have contempt for compatriots who have supported government and military's actions and for those who stayed and decided to fight, and have felt mortified being unable to stop the war.

6. RELIEF AND FREEDOM

Despite the difficulties and the shock of their abrupt departure, some respondents noted that they experienced great relief after crossing the border—they felt they could freely express their opinion and not be afraid of reprisals. This feeling has given them moral strength.

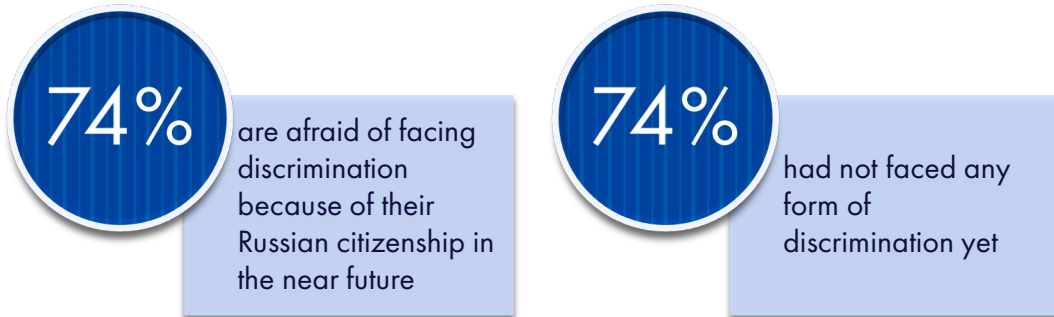
7. INTEREST AND ENTHUSIASM

Some respondents perceived the forced departure with interest—as an adventure and a challenge, a path to new opportunities.

8. HOPE

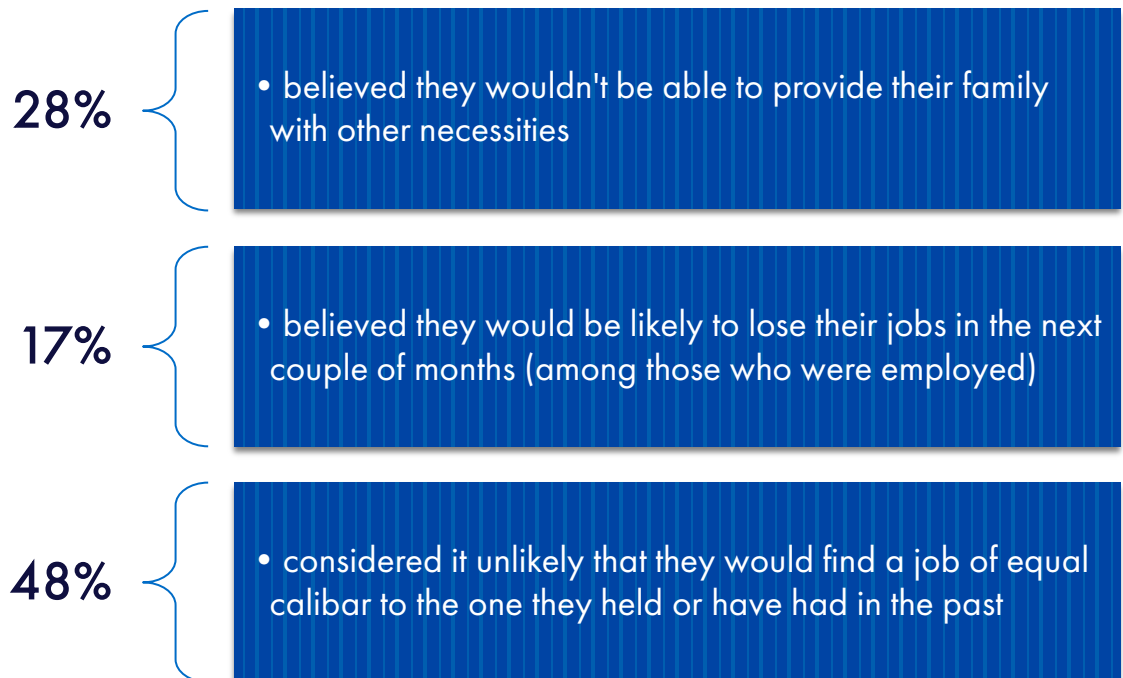
Some people revealed their hope for a speedy end to the war and some kind of return to normalcy in Russia that would open a way back home. Others professed the desire to build a new, better life in a freer country.

Discrimination against Russians



Concerns about job and finances

In general, respondents anticipated being able to earn enough money to feed their families in the next couple of months, **but**



Vulnerability

- More **Women** expressed fear of losing their jobs and being unable to find a new one than men.
- **Individuals working in the IT sector** were the most confident about being able to secure a decent job. Representatives of the IT, science, and education sectors, as well as office workers, were more positive about their ability to provide for their families. Those working in medicine and the pharmaceutical industry, in addition to those with highly specialized careers, were most afraid of losing their jobs.
- **Non-English speakers** were more nervous about job loss and the feasibility to find adequate work than English speakers.
- There was a strong correlation between people's confidence in their ability to find an acceptable position and their age.

Pessimism



Threats people would face upon returning to Russia

