

# World Risk Poll: Spotlight on Ukraine and Russia

○ Safety & Wellbeing

○ Risk & Satisfaction

○ Government & Leadership

○ Cybersecurity & Disinformation





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## KEY FINDINGS

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- The World Risk Poll indicates that hostilities with Russia were not a major concern in Ukraine prior to the invasion. Concern about “war and terrorism” was the sixth highest ranked risk in the country, behind risks related to health, transportation and the economy. One in 15 Ukrainians named “war and terrorism” as their biggest concern in 2021.
- There was a substantial increase in Ukrainians’ feelings of safety when compared to five years earlier. Between 2019 and 2021, the proportion of Ukrainians reporting feeling safer than five years prior increased by seven percentage points to 26 per cent of the population. Conversely, the global average on this indicator fell by 8.6 points to 27.4 per cent of the population.
- In contrast, the proportion of Russians feeling safer than five years prior fell between 2019 and 2021, tracking with the global trend.
- In November 2021, 58 per cent of Ukrainians said that, if the country were to join just one economic union, it should join the EU, compared to 21 per cent that said it should join the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union.
- In both Ukraine and Russia, general health-related concerns (not including COVID-19) were the most widely identified risk in 2021. COVID-19 was ranked only seventh in Ukraine and fifth in Russia.
- The most significant deterioration in sentiment in Russia was related to the economy; nearly three times as many people rated the economy as their top concern in 2021 than in 2019.
- Confidence in the future was high in 2021 in both Ukraine and Russia, where the same proportion of people, 19.5 per cent, felt that in five years they would have the best possible life conditions.
- In Ukraine, confidence in the future more than doubled between 2019 and 2021. In contrast, the global average deteriorated.
- Despite the heightened levels of Ukrainian optimism in 2021, confidence in the national government, its capabilities and its integrity declined considerably between 2019 and 2021.
- Underscoring the drop in confidence in the national government, in 2021 only 20.3 per cent of Ukrainians believed their government was well prepared to deal with a disaster, the 11th worst score among surveyed countries.
- In contrast, 47.6 per cent of Russians believed their government was well prepared to deal with a disaster, more than twice as high as in Ukraine.
- However, public trust in the military in Ukraine was high at 67.4 per cent and rising, while in Russia it was on the decline. In Russia, 72 per cent citizens had confidence in their military.
- These trends coincided with falls in President Zelenskyy’s popularity prior to the invasion. Since the war began, Zelenskyy’s approval rating has increased to over 90 per cent, up from just over 30 per cent in December.
- Russians’ feelings of negativity toward their government also increased, but the changes were much smaller. Even with this, Russians maintained much more favourable views of the government than Ukrainians.
- In 2021, Ukrainians were far more likely to approve of the leadership of the United States and Germany than Russians, and Russians were far more likely to approve of the leadership of their own country and of China.
- Despite the country being the target of over 685,000 cyberattacks between 2020 and 2021, Ukrainians’ levels of concern about their personal information being stolen or used by the government were well below global averages.
- About 38 per cent of Russians and Ukrainians expressed a high level of worry about encountering false information online, compared to well over half of people globally.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lloyd's Register Foundation World Risk Poll, when combined with associated data from the Gallup World Poll and a number of other sources, reveals a complex and sometimes counterintuitive view of the world for both Ukrainians and Russians prior to the Russian invasion in 2022.

Ukrainian citizens' positive sentiments on a number of questions on social wellbeing were on the rise at a time when global averages were in decline.

In the lead-up to the invasion, Ukrainians' perceptions of safety and security were improving, with the percentage of people reporting feeling safer than five years prior rising from 19 to 26 per cent, bringing it closer to the global average. This represents a major increase, especially as it came at a time when the global average fell markedly, from 36 to 27.4 per cent, and for Russians the rate fell from 19.2 to 17.4 per cent.

The conflict has unfolded within the context of Ukraine's increasing socio-political reorientation toward the West. By November 2021, 58 per cent of Ukrainians said that, if the country were to join just one economic union, it should join the European Union (EU), compared to 21 per cent that said it should join the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union. This was the highest rating ever recorded. Similarly, 54 per cent said they would vote to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), compared to 28 per cent who would vote against joining.

Surprisingly, "war and terrorism" was only the sixth highest-rated concern in Ukraine in 2021. Ukrainians rated health-related risks (not including COVID-19) as their top concern. Transportation-related risks, crime and violence, economic concerns and financial hardship were more frequently cited than "war and terrorism".

Additionally, levels of both life satisfaction and optimism about the future were on the rise in Ukraine. Optimism was assessed by measuring the percentage of people foreseeing the "best possible" life conditions for themselves five years in the future. Globally, optimism slightly deteriorated between 2019 and 2021, from 16.6 to 16.1 per cent. In contrast, in both Ukraine and Russia, the score markedly improved, with the Ukrainian score more than doubling and the Russian score increasing by roughly a third. In 2021, the score for both countries was 19.5, several points above the global average.

Overall life satisfaction also increased substantially, with the percentage of Ukrainians rating their lives positively,

increasing from 28.7 per cent to 41.3 per cent. In Russia, overall life satisfaction also improved, though by a much smaller margin, rising from 42.2 per cent to 46.4 per cent.

However, the survey question to show the largest deterioration in Russia was concern over economic-related issues, where the percentage of people rating this as their top issue rose nearly threefold between 2019 and 2021, indicating that Russians were becoming increasingly concerned about the economy prior to the invasion.

In contrast to the perceptions of a positive future, Ukrainians' faith in their government and elections deteriorated substantially between 2019 and 2021. Distrust in government rose from 45.1 to 68.2 per cent, while perceptions of dishonesty in elections rose from 36.1 to 61.1 per cent. The overall drop in Ukrainian confidence in the national government aligns with the generally declining trend in approval for President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, which fell from a high of more than 70 per cent in September 2019 to just over 30 per cent in 2021.

One of the more striking results from the study was the lack of faith Ukrainians had in their government to deal with a disaster. In 2021, only 20.3 per cent of the population believed that the government could effectively manage a disaster. This compared to 47.6 per cent in Russia and 50.5 per cent globally. However, Ukrainian confidence in the military was relatively strong, with 67.4 per cent of citizens expressing confidence in the military. Russia had an even higher level of confidence, with 72.5 per cent of the population expressing confidence in the military, though both of these levels were lower than the global average of 76.7 per cent.

Findings on the popularity of President Putin may give some insight into his thinking towards the war. In Russia, President Putin's popularity has always been high. However, Putin's highest popularity ratings occurred when Russia invaded Georgia and following the 2014 annexation of Crimea. A similar jump in approval occurred following the invasion of Ukraine, with his popularity rising from 63 to 83 per cent between November 2021 and May 2022.<sup>1</sup>

# Introduction



**The Russian invasion of Ukraine has brought about massive disruptions to both countries and to the international community at large. As of May 2022, it is estimated that more than 12 million Ukrainians have been internationally or internally displaced by the war, representing approximately one-fourth of the population.<sup>2</sup> Such disruptions will no doubt have significant impacts on Ukrainians' sense of security and stability in the years to come.**

The launch of the Russian invasion has been widely attributed to the perceived threat from an increasingly Western-leaning Ukraine.<sup>3</sup> While the decision to invade may have been driven by geopolitical motivations, understanding the sentiments and worries of regular Ukrainians and Russians in the past few years provides a backdrop to the events of 2022. More than this, it gives evidence-based indications about people's outlooks in the two countries and the directions in which they were headed prior to the invasion.

As such, understanding the perception of risk in both countries prior to the Russian invasion offers an interesting case study for the evolution of perceptions.

Drawing on the survey data of the Lloyd's Register Foundation World Risk Poll, discussed in Box 1, as well as associated data from the Gallup World Poll and a number of other sources, this brief aims to reveal the views and perceptions of risk of Ukrainians and Russians between 2019 and 2021.

This background paper highlights views across three key themes:

- Perspectives on Safety
- Perspectives on Government
- Perspectives on Cybersecurity and Disinformation Online

## BOX 1

### Lloyd's Register Foundation World Risk Poll

This brief forms part of a larger collaboration between the Lloyd's Register Foundation and the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) to understand global perceptions of risk through the World Risk Poll Survey (<https://wrp.lrfoundation.org.uk/>).

The Lloyd's Register Foundation World Risk Poll is the first ever global study of worry and risk across the world. The poll is conducted by Gallup as part of its World Poll and is based on interviews with over 150,000 people, including those living in places where little or no official data exists, yet where reported risks are often high.

As part of this collaboration, IEP has released the first ever global Safety Perceptions Index Report which can be downloaded at [www.visionofhumanity.org](http://www.visionofhumanity.org).

Further information on the World Risk Poll, and the ongoing collaboration between Lloyd's Register Foundation and IEP can be found in the Annex to this report.



# Perspectives on Safety and Wellbeing

## SAFETY COMPARED TO FIVE YEARS AGO

In the years preceding the invasion, Ukraine experienced overall improvements in perceptions of security. As shown in Figure 1, between 2019 and 2021, the percentage of people reporting feeling safer than five years prior rose from 19 to 26 per cent. This represents a major uptick, especially as it came at a time when the global average fell markedly, from 36 to 27.4 per cent, and for Russians the rate fell from 19.2 to 17.4 per cent.

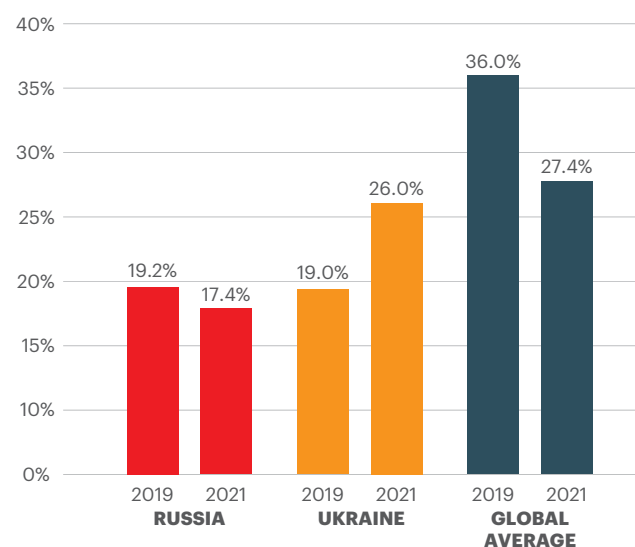
This change in perceptions coincides with political events within the region. The threat posed by Russia since the initiation of conflict between the two countries in 2014 has loomed large over the lives of Ukrainians, though prior to the invasion this conflict played out primarily in the eastern Donbas region and the Crimean Peninsula.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the Russo-Ukrainian War has unfolded in the aftermath of Russia's incursion into Georgia in 2008 in support of separatists in the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which both share a border with Russia. The international community's muted response to that war has been credited with providing an opening for Russia to engage in further aggression against its neighbours.<sup>5</sup>

As shown in Figure 2, Ukraine's scores across the three principal domains of the Global Peace Index (GPI) – *Safety and Security*, *Ongoing Conflict* and *Militarisation* – were all impacted by the escalation of hostilities with Russia and Russian-backed groups in 2014. In particular, Ukraine saw its *Ongoing Conflict* score deteriorate markedly between 2014 and 2017, which was by far the most lethal pre-invasion period of the conflict.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, this conflict unfolded within the context of Ukraine's increasing socio-political reorientation toward the West. A turning point was the 2013 "Euromaidan" protests, which arose as a result of a sudden decision by the country's government to not to sign

FIGURE 1  
**Feeling safer than five years prior, 2019–2021**

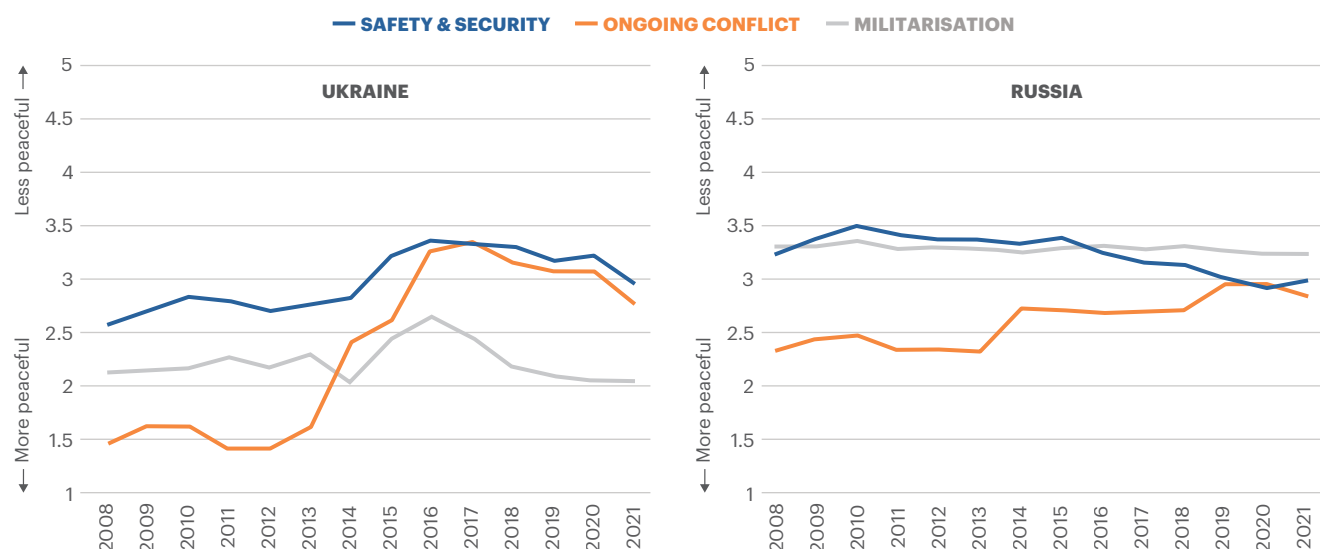
Between 2019 and 2021, there was a sizable increase in the proportion of Ukrainians feeling safer than five years prior, while the proportion of Russians declined slightly.



Source: World Risk Poll

FIGURE 2  
**Global Peace Index (GPI) domain scores, Ukraine and Russia, 2008–2021**

While Ukraine and Russian had very different *Militarisation* domain scores in 2021, their *Safety and Security* and *Ongoing Conflict* scores were roughly the same.



Source: IEP

the European Union-Ukraine Association Agreement and instead pursue closer economic ties with Russia.<sup>7</sup> The protests eventually led to the ousting of pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich (2010-2014) and the election of Petro Poroshenko (2014-2019).

Poroshenko's government led a process of growing independence and alignment with the West, which entailed promoting Ukrainian national identity and use of the Ukrainian language over Russian. It has also involved closer relations with the EU and with NATO.<sup>8</sup> This process largely continued under President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (2019-present).

### GREATEST REPORTED RISKS IN UKRAINE AND RUSSIA

Russia did not represent the uppermost worry in the minds of most Ukrainians in either 2019 or 2021. Instead, the most commonly identified threat in both years were general health-related concerns. In both years, violence-related risks and transportation-related risks rounded out the top three concerns in Ukraine. With regard to "war and terrorism" in particular, which was a possible response in the 2021 survey but not in the 2019

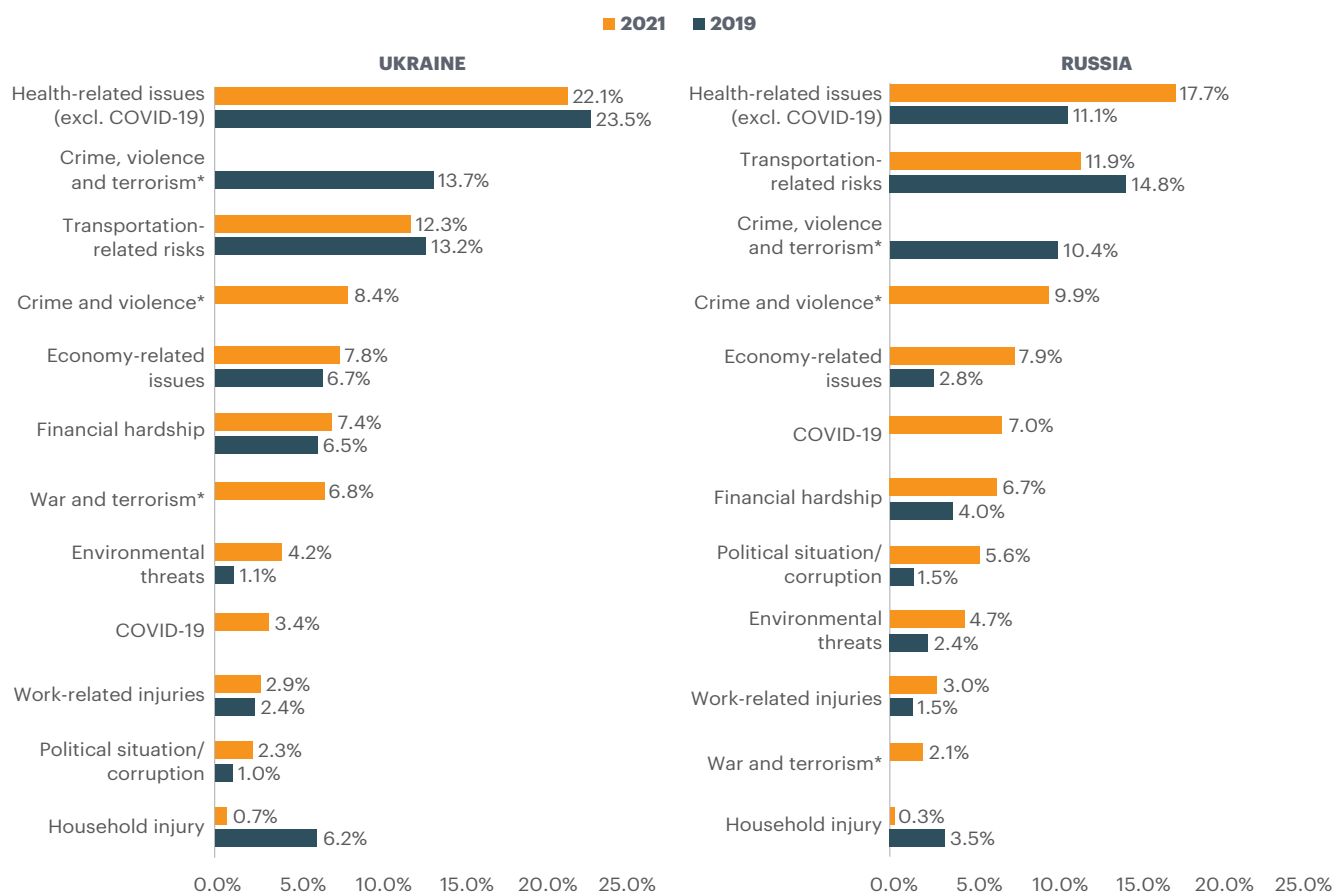
survey, 6.8 per cent of Ukrainians identified this as their top concern in 2021, making it only the sixth most commonly cited risk in the country. Ukrainians' top concerns in both 2019 and 2021 are outlined in Figure 3.

The top concerns identified by Russians were largely the same as those identified by Ukrainians, as also shown in Figure 3. Specifically, the top three sets of risks in both 2019 and 2021 were health-related concerns that did not include COVID-19 (which is discussed in Box 2), transportation-related risks and violence-related risks.<sup>9</sup> However, while both countries ranked health-related issues as their biggest risk in 2021, Russians ranked transportation-related dangers as their biggest risk in 2019. The percentage of Russians ranking health concerns as their biggest risk experienced the largest increase of any category, as it rose 6.6 points, from 11.1 to 17.1 per cent. However, the category that experienced the most significant deterioration in sentiment was related to the economy, which saw a nearly threefold increase in the proportion of people rating it as their top concern. Given the post-invasion sanctions that have been placed on Russia, the economic hardship has likely become even more acute in 2022.

FIGURE 3

### Top issues identified as the greatest risks in Ukraine and Russia, 2019 and 2021

Only about one in 15 Ukrainians identified "war and terrorism" as their biggest concern in 2021.



Source: World Risk Poll

Note: \*In 2019, violence-related risks were represented by a single category ("crime, violence and terrorism"), while in 2021 such risks were represented by two separate categories ("crime and violence" and "war and terrorism").



BOX 2

## COVID-19 in Ukraine and Russia

The rise in perceptions of safety in Ukraine are particularly noteworthy given that the COVID-19 pandemic began in between the 2019 and 2021 surveys. As such, it might be expected that fears about the coronavirus would lead to an overall increase in feelings of insecurity. However, as shown in Figure 3, COVID-19 was only the seventh most commonly cited risk in Ukraine in 2021, with just 3.4 per cent of the population identifying it as their top concern. Seven per cent of Russians named it as their top concern, making it was the fifth most commonly cited risk in that country. For comparison, COVID-19 was the top concern for 5.2 per cent of the population in the United States, while the global average was 7.2 per cent.

As of 24 February 2022, Ukraine had registered 112,459 confirmed deaths from COVID-19, while Russia had registered 341,624. By comparison, the United Kingdom had recorded 162,544 and the United States had recorded 943,312.<sup>10</sup> The cumulative number of COVID-19 deaths in these four countries are shown – on a logarithmic scale – in Figure 4.

As can be seen, the outbreaks in the United Kingdom and the United States occurred earlier and led to a rapid rise in the number of deaths in the first several months of the

pandemic. In contrast, the outbreaks in Russia and, particularly, Ukraine occurred later and the rise in deaths was much slower.

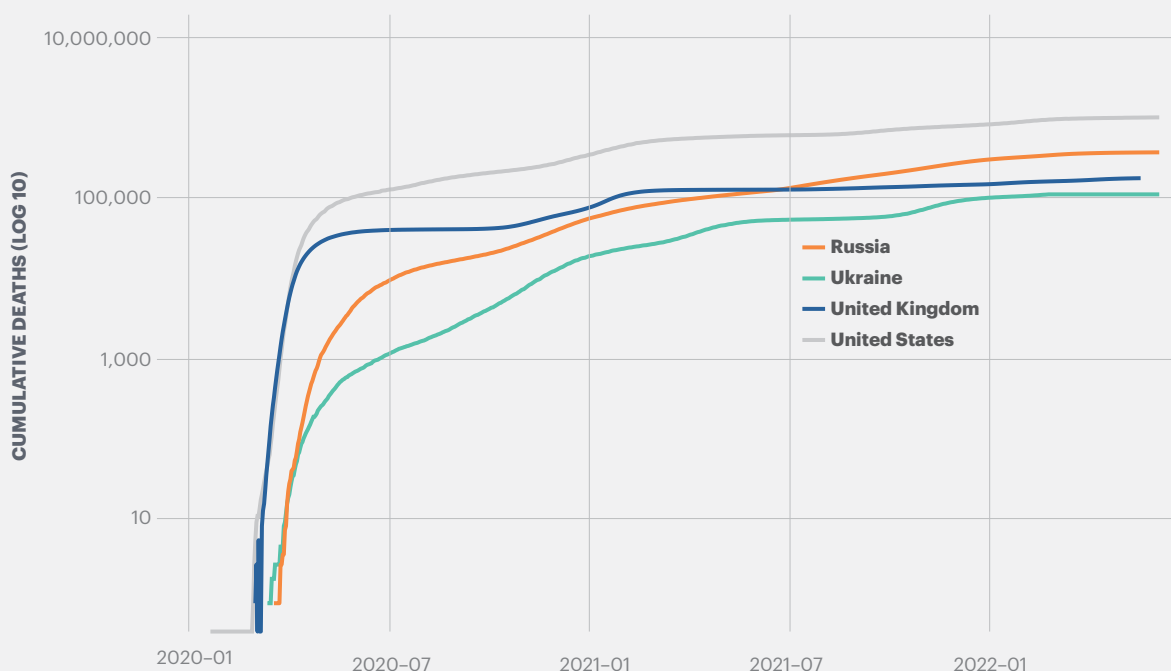
That said, Ukraine's overall toll as of February 2022 equates to a death rate of approximately 273 per 100,000 people, while Russia's equates to about 235 per 100,000 people. Such rates place both nations among the 35 countries with the highest confirmed COVID-19 death rates in the world.

In view of the many economic and supply-chain disruptions brought on by the global lockdown measures and other administrative responses to the pandemic, it is also worth noting that the World Risk Poll revealed that food security was not a major issue for either Russians or Ukrainians in 2021. Less than two per cent of their populations reported going more than a day without food, far below the global average of 21.4 per cent. However, the percentages of those unable to obtain needed medicine for more than a day was significantly higher. Just over 25 per cent of Russians reported being unable to obtain medicine, slightly below the global average of 26.8 per cent, while 16.8 of Ukrainians reported the same.

FIGURE 4

### Cumulative COVID-19 deaths in Ukraine, Russia, the UK and the US, 2020-2022

As of 24 February 2022, Ukraine had recorded over 112,000 total COVID-19 deaths, while Russia had recorded over 341,000.



Source: COVID-19 Data Hub

## PERCEPTION OF LIFE SATISFACTION

The data on perceptions of security and risk in Ukraine and Russia collected by the World Risk Poll are complemented by data on perceptions of current life circumstances and future prospects collected in the associated Gallup World Poll. Given the rise in overall feelings of safety in Ukraine between 2019 and 2021, it is noteworthy that there were major increases in Ukrainians' levels of life satisfaction as well as the life conditions they foresaw for themselves five years in the future.

As shown in Figure 5, Russians' overall life satisfaction was higher than Ukrainians'. However, the percentage of Ukrainians rating their life as the "best possible" more than doubled between 2019 and 2021, rising from 2.1 to 4.9 per cent. During the same period, the percentage rating their lives positively overall rose from 28.7 to 41.3 per cent.

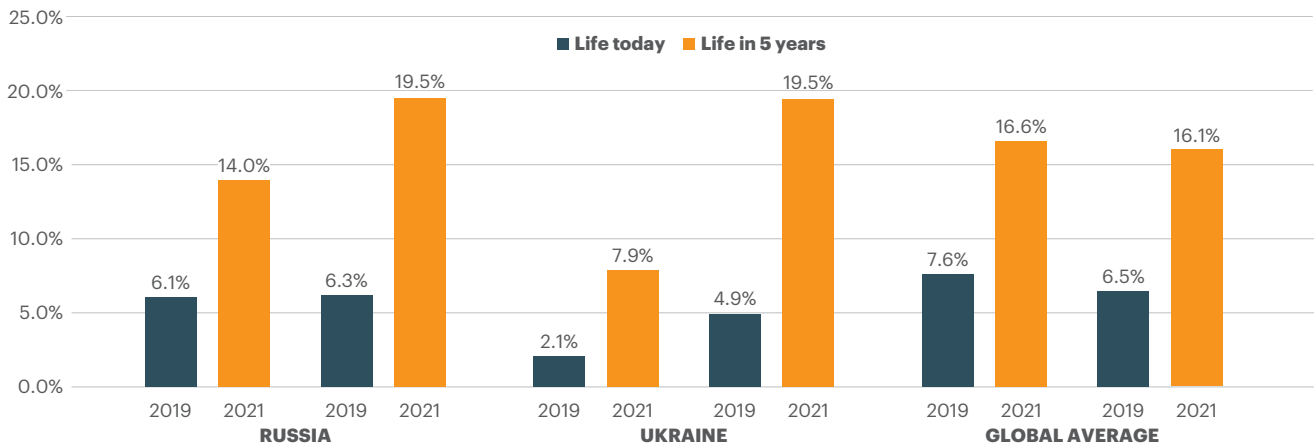
While the change was also positive among Russians, it was much smaller. The percentage of Russians rating their life conditions as the best possible rose from 6.1 to 6.3 per cent, and the percentage rating their lives positively overall increased from 42.2 to 46.4 per cent. Globally, the average percentage of people rating their life as the best possible fell from 7.6 to 6.5 per cent.

Similar changes occurred with regard to optimism about the future. The percentage of Ukrainians foreseeing their life in five years as being the best possible also more than doubled, rising from 7.9 to 19.5 per cent, and the percentage viewing their future as positive overall rose from 42.8 to 57.4 per cent. For Russians, the percentage foreseeing the best possible future rose from 14 to 19.5 per cent, and the percentage foreseeing an overall positive future increased from 54.4 to 56.6 per cent. Globally, the average percentage of people viewing their future as the best possible fell by just half a point, from 16.6 to 16.1 per cent.

FIGURE 5

### Optimism about the present and the future, 2019 and 2021

Between 2019 and 2021, the percentage of Ukrainians rating their current life conditions and their future prospects as the "best possible" more than doubled.



Source: Gallup

# Perspectives on Government



## FAITH IN GOVERNMENT

The positive changes in perceptions of security and life satisfaction experienced in Ukraine between 2019 and 2021 contrast notably with changes in opinion about the national government over the same period. As shown in Figure 6, the proportion of the population expressing no confidence in the national government rose from 45.1 to 68.2 per cent. During the same time period, the proportion of Russians expressing no confidence rose from 49.7 to 55.8 per cent. Both countries' rates were worse than the global averages, which rose from 37.4 to 39.3 per cent between 2019 and 2021.

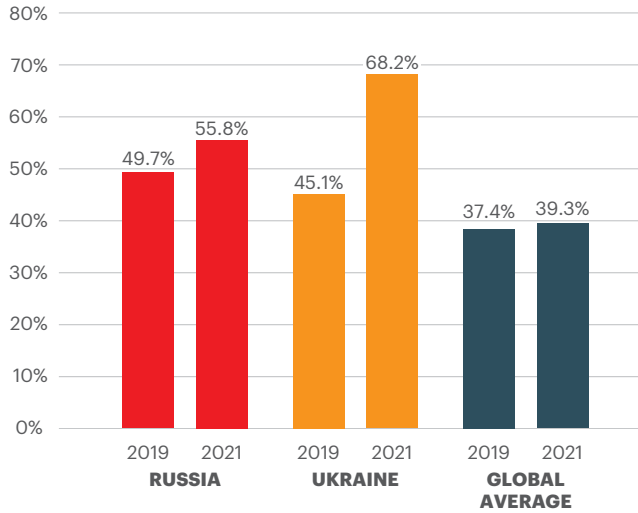
Similar trends were also seen with regard to perceptions of the honesty of elections, according to Gallup data. Between 2019 and 2021, the proportion of Ukrainians regarding national elections as dishonest nearly doubled, rising from 36.1 to 61.1 per cent. During the same period, there was a notable, though smaller, rise in the proportion of Russians regarding national elections as dishonest, from 56.6 to 66.7 per cent. In contrast, the global average rose only slightly, from 42 to 44.2 per cent.

This rise in the Ukrainian public's distrust of its government helps explain one of the most striking findings of the 2021 World Risk Poll. As seen in Figure 7, only 20.3 per cent of Ukrainians believed their government was well prepared to deal with a disaster, the 11th lowest rating of any country surveyed. In contrast, 47.6 per cent of Russians believed their government was well prepared to deal with a disaster, three points lower than the 50.5 per cent global average.

FIGURE 6

### Distrust in the national government, 2019–2021

Between 2019 and 2021, the proportion of Ukrainians expressing no confidence in their government rose from 45.1 to 68.2 per cent, while the proportion in Russia rose from 49.7 to 55.8 per cent.



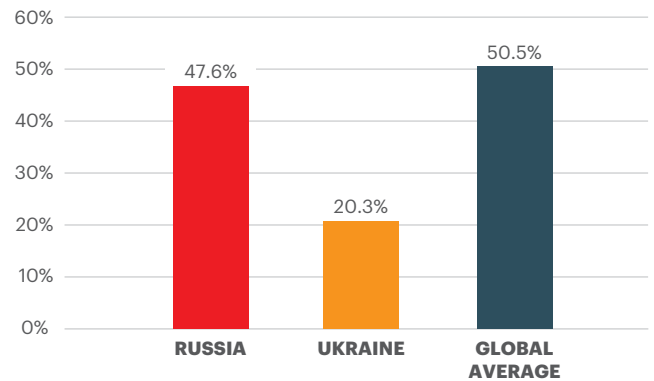
Source: Gallup

Despite this overall drop in confidence in the government and its capabilities, Ukrainians’ views of their military actually improved slightly during the same period. According to Gallup data, the proportion of the Ukrainian public with trust in the military rose from 66.3 to 67.4 per cent between 2019 and 2021. This came at a time when Russians’ trust in their military fell from 74.6 to 72.5 per cent and, globally, the figure remained nearly constant at around 77 per cent. The uptick in Ukrainian trust followed several years in which the country dramatically increased its military spending. According to data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), in the years that followed the annexation of Crimea, Ukraine’s annual military expenditure

FIGURE 7

### Capacity of government to deal with a disaster, 2021

In 2021, only one in five Ukrainians believed their government was well prepared to deal with a disaster.



Source: World Risk Poll

nearly doubled, rising from \$3 billion in 2014 to \$5.9 billion in 2021.<sup>11</sup>

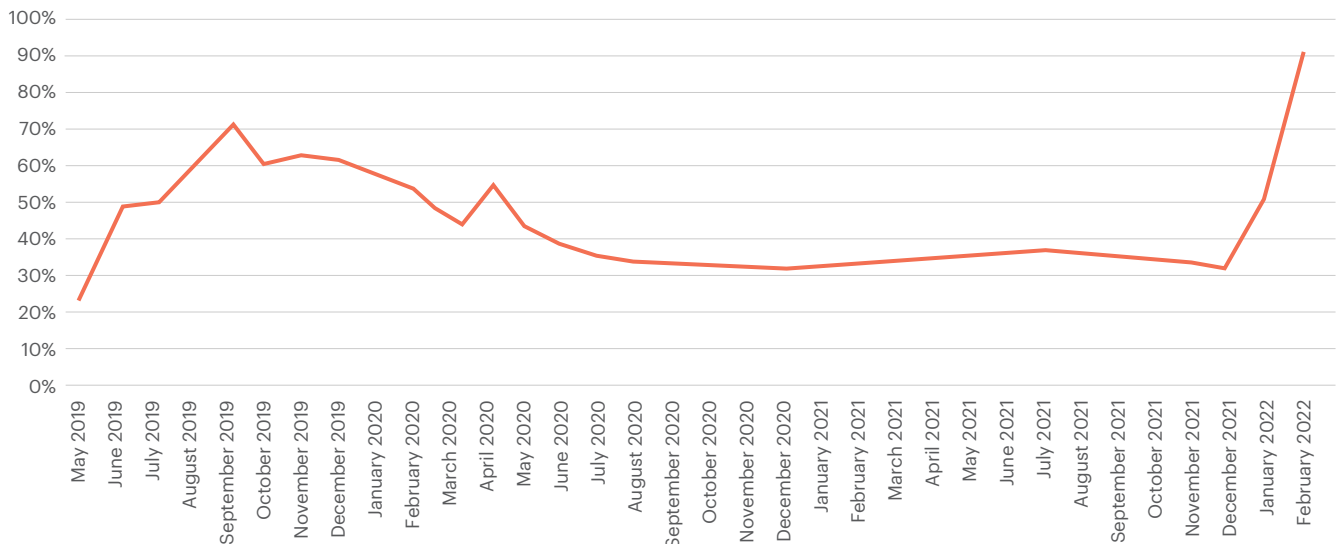
Notwithstanding this minor increase in trust in the military, the overall drop in Ukrainian confidence in the national government aligns with the generally declining trend in approval for President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during the same period. As shown in Figure 8, after enjoying the approval of over 70 per cent of the population in September 2019, the president’s rating gradually fell over the next two years, bottoming out at just over 30 per cent during the course of 2021. After that, the mobilisation of Russian troops on the Ukrainian border and the eventual invasion led to a major spike in his approval rating.

After campaigning as an outsider willing to tackle corruption within the political establishment and winning a landslide victory, Zelenskyy saw his uniquely high levels of popularity decline as a result of a number of factors. Foremost among these were challenges

FIGURE 8

### Zelenskyy approval ratings, 2019–2022

Public approval of President Zelenskyy gradually declined between September 2019 and December 2021, before spiking with the invasion.



Source: Rating Sociological Group

related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic forced the closure of Ukraine's borders with EU countries, which cut off the flow of the migrant worker remittances on which the Ukrainian economy heavily relies. The economy also suffered as a result of lockdown measures that severely impacted small- and medium-sized businesses.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, one of Zelenskyy's central campaign promises was to negotiate a peace agreement in the eastern Donbas region, where Russian-backed separatist groups have been fighting with Ukrainian forces since 2014.<sup>13</sup> Over the course of his presidency, despite a series of peace talks between the relevant actors and a July 2020 ceasefire that resulted in a temporary drop in casualties, Zelenskyy was not ultimately successful in negotiating a lasting peace.<sup>14</sup> By early 2021, hostilities had returned to their pre-ceasefire levels and the situation began to deteriorate significantly, leading gradually to the Russia's military build-up on the border and eventually its invasion of Ukraine.

Across the border, over two decades in power, President Putin has consistently enjoyed very high approval ratings from the Russian public. Large-scale military operations have historically had a direct and positive impact on Putin's popularity.<sup>15</sup> As shown in Figure 9, in both 2014 and 2022 and to a lesser extent in 2008, the initiation of hostilities against Ukraine and Georgia led to major upticks in popularity.

However, it has been found that Putin's popularity over longer timeframes has been tied to the country's economic performance.<sup>16</sup> On this note, while Russia was less severely impacted than most other countries by the economic downturns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, its economy still contracted by three per cent in 2020,<sup>17</sup> and at the pandemic's height in mid-2020, Putin's approval fell to its lowest ever point, 59 per cent.<sup>18</sup> While Russia's economy rebounded in 2021, growing by 4.3 per cent, its growth was forecast to slow considerably in both 2022 and 2023.<sup>19</sup>

In light of these developments and forecasts, it is noteworthy that

between 2019 and 2021 there was a marginal decline in feelings of public safety and a rise of distrust in the government. Taken together, these figures point to a mixed picture of rising ambivalence about the national government leading up to the invasion of Ukraine.<sup>20</sup>

However, any apparent decline in support for the Russian government should not be overstated. While the proportion of Russians expressing 'no confidence' in the government rose between 2019 and 2021, the proportion expressing 'confidence' remained virtually unchanged, moving by less than 0.1 per cent.

## PERCEPTIONS OF FOREIGN LEADERSHIP

The most commonly cited reason for the launch of the Russian invasion was the perceived threat of a Western-leaning Ukraine. Over recent years, Ukraine has looked to strengthen its political, economic and military ties with the EU and, crucially, NATO. While this growing association with the West was led by the Ukrainian government, it was also a reflection of the attitudes of citizens.

According to survey data from the past decade, Ukrainian support for joining both the EU and NATO reached their highest ever levels at the end of 2021. In November 2021, 58 per cent of Ukrainians said that, if the country were to join just one economic union, it should join the EU, compared to 21 per cent that said it should join the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union. Similarly, 54 per cent said they would vote to join NATO, compared to 28 per cent who would vote against joining.<sup>21</sup>

The Ukrainian public's growing identification with Western countries can also be seen in Figure 10. As of 2019, Ukrainians were far more likely to approve of the leadership of Germany and the United States than to approve of Russia's leadership, with less than ten per cent of the population approving of the latter. In contrast, Russians were far more likely to approve of the leadership of their own country, as well as that of China.

FIGURE 9  
**Putin approval ratings, 2006–2022**

Data from an independent pollster shows that President Putin's consistently high approval ratings rise even higher during international military engagements.



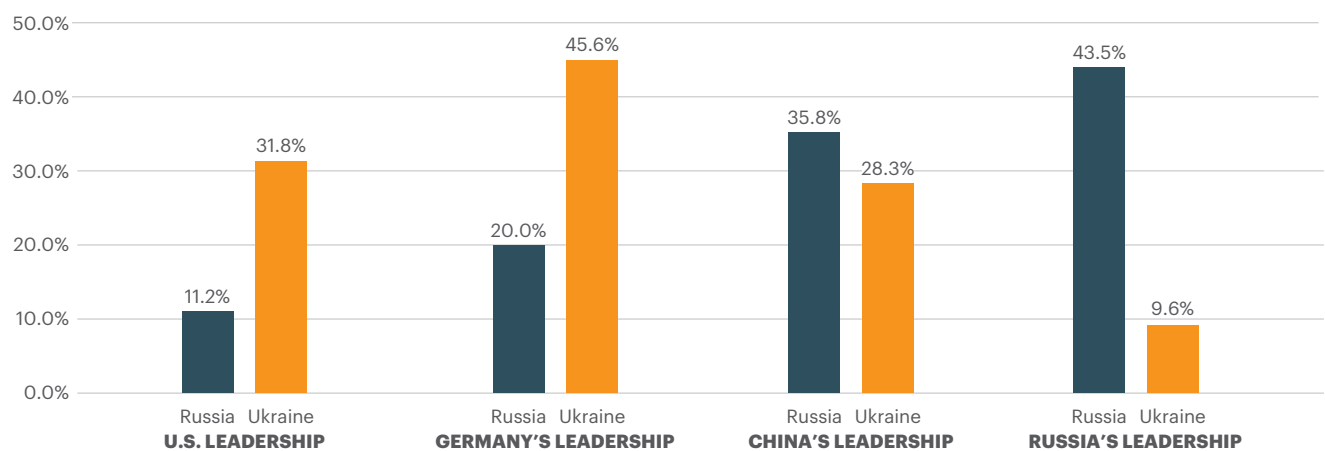
Source: Levada Center

The growing divergence in the quality of Ukraine's relations with Russia as compared to its relations with Western countries can also be seen in news reports. Figure 11 displays the change in tone and posture in Ukraine-EU relations and in Ukraine-Russia relations since 1996. It makes use of the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS) to assess changes in international relations rhetoric. Consisting of a database of millions of events over several decades, ICEWS automatically identifies and extracts news articles from around the globe on a weekly basis, coding events by their theme and significance. The composite scores listed below represent the frequency and/or significance of positive and negative messages and actions involving both Ukraine and the EU, on one hand, and Ukraine and Russia, on the other.

The figure demonstrates that while the median news sentiment of Ukraine-EU relations has remained consistently positive over the past three decades, deteriorations in sentiment in Ukraine-Russia relations have meant that the gap between these two bilateral relations has widened substantially. In particular, following the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the tone and subject matter of international press reports deteriorated significantly, changing from net positive reporting to net negative reporting. Average news sentiment became more positive between 2017 and 2020, before again deteriorating substantially in the lead-up to the invasion.

FIGURE 10  
**Approval of international leadership, 2019**

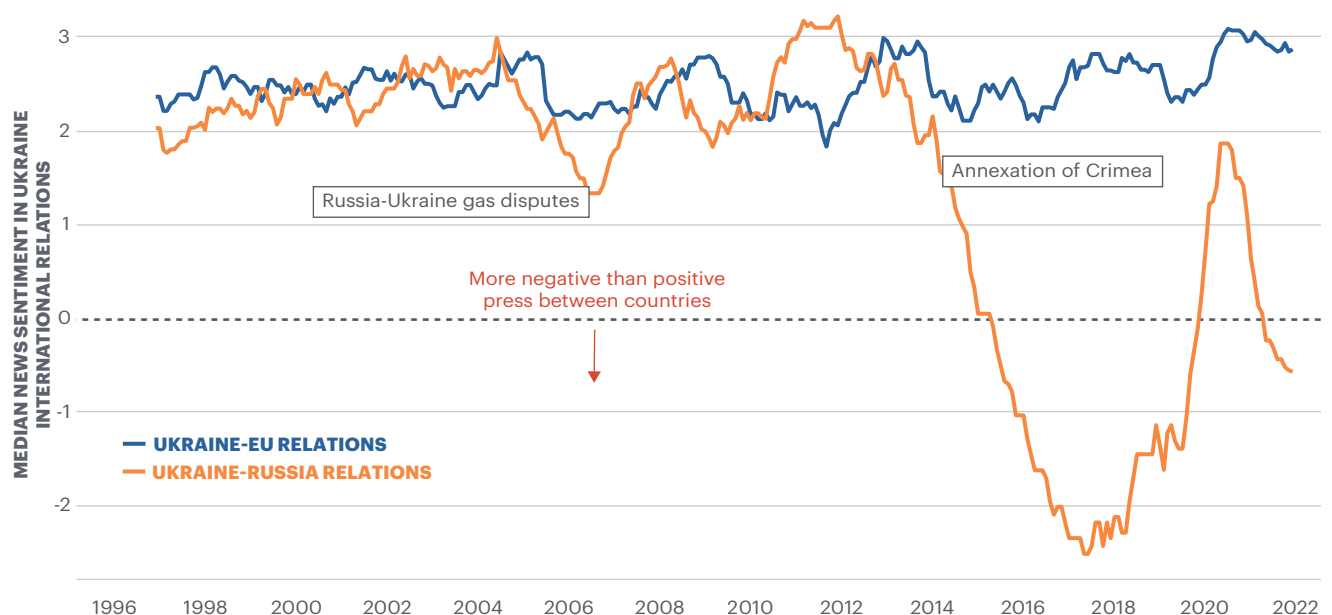
In 2019, Ukrainians were far more likely to approve of the leadership of the United States and Germany than Russians, and Russians were far more likely to approve of the leadership of their own country and of China.



Source: Gallup

FIGURE 11  
**Median news sentiment, Ukraine-Russia relations and Ukraine-EU relations, 1996–2022**

Aggregations of the tone and subject matter of press coverage on Ukraine-Russia relations show a major deterioration in the relationship following the annexation of Crimea and in the lead-up to the 2022 invasion.



Source: ICEWS

# Perspectives on Cybersecurity and Disinformation Online



## CONCERN OVER DATA PRIVACY

While the armed invasion of Ukraine has had dire impacts on the country and on international relations, the escalation of conventional warfare follows several years in which cyberwarfare has been on the rise in Ukraine, with many of the attacks attributed to Russia. Between 2020 and 2021, for example, Ukraine faced over 685,000 cyberattacks.<sup>22</sup>

One early example of a Russian-led cyberattack occurred in December 2015 when Ukraine's industrial control systems networks were targeted by destructive malware causing power outages in the western Ivano-Frankivsk region; around 700,000 homes were without power for several hours.<sup>23</sup> A year later, Ukraine's power grid faced a malicious malware attack, called CrushOverride, which blacked out a portion of Kyiv's total power capacity for an hour.<sup>24</sup> The attack began when a 330-kilowatt sub-station was influenced by external sources which lay undetected within the IT system for six months, during which time they acquired more knowledge about the system.<sup>25</sup> This attack appears to have been a trial run by hackers wanting to test new malware directed against an electric power system. It is believed the malware could be fitted to target other critical infrastructure.

In 2017, Ukraine also suffered the NotPetya attacks which deployed malware aimed at rendering data unusable. The malware was spread through tax software that companies and individuals require for filing taxes in Ukraine. The code was such that even if users did pay up, their data could never be recovered, with its destructive purpose meaning it cannot be classified as ransomware. The malware spread to other countries, affecting medical facilities and other institutions around the world. The financial cost to the United States alone was around US\$1 billion.<sup>26</sup>

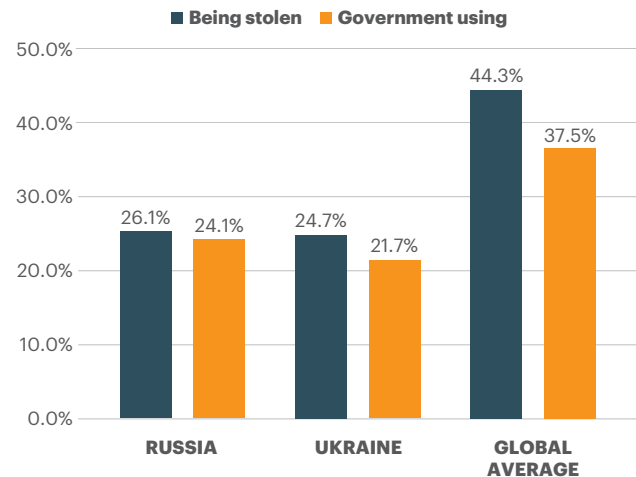
In January 2022, as diplomatic efforts were being ratcheted up, Ukraine experienced a widespread cyberattack on several government departments. The attack took the form of a message saying "Ukrainians! ... All information about you has become public. Be afraid and expect the worse. It's your past, present and future." The message included a reproduction of the Ukrainian flag and a crossed out map with a reference to "historical land".<sup>27</sup>

While Russia has long also been a major target for significant cyberattacks, the country reportedly did figure among the top ten most targeted countries between 2006 and 2020.<sup>28</sup> Since the launch of the invasion, however, Russia has experienced a major uptick in cyberattacks. On the day of the invasion, the hacker group Anonymous declared cyber war on the Russian government. Recent analysis has shown that cyberattacks on Russian citizens rose fivefold between January and March 2022. This has made Russia the most attacked country in the world, with the email accounts of Russians accounting for nearly 20 per cent of all breached accounts globally. In contrast, cyberattacks on Ukraine actually fell following the invasion.<sup>29</sup>

FIGURE 12

## Worry about personal information being stolen or used by the government, 2021

The proportions of Ukrainians and Russians saying they were "very worried" about their personal information being stolen or used by the government were far below the global averages.



Source: World Risk Poll

Against this backdrop of increased cyberattacks from state and unaffiliated actors over the past decade, it would be expected that people in Ukraine and Russia would exhibit elevated levels of concern about their use of information systems and the security of their personal information. However, the World Risk Poll shows that the proportions of Ukrainians and Russians saying they were "very worried" about their personal information being stolen or used by the government were far lower than global averages, as depicted in Figure 12.

In 2021, 24.7 per cent of Ukrainians and 26.1 per cent of Russians expressed a high level of worry that their personal information might be stolen, nearly 20 points lower than the global average of 44.3 per cent. The levels of worry in the two countries about the government using personal information were well below the global average, with 21.7 per cent of Ukrainians and 24.1 per cent of Russians saying they were very worried about it, compared to 37.5 per cent globally.

In addition to cybersecurity, understanding Ukrainian and Russian worries related to the use of information systems can offer insights in relation both sides' efforts to shape public opinion during wartime. As with any war, a key front in this conflict for both Ukraine and Russia relates to propagating the messages that serve to bolster national and international support for their respective sides.

On this note, with most of the country having rallied behind him, President Zelenskyy has been widely credited for his international communications activities on conventional and social media to garner moral and material support for Ukraine.<sup>30</sup> In contrast, the

Russian government's control of the information disseminated within the country's media has been cited as a reason that more Russians do not oppose the conflict.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, analysis has shown that pro-Russian messaging has also been influential on Twitter and other social media platforms in countries in South and Southeast Asia as well as Africa. Mixing organic social media engagement with inauthentic activity (such as "bot" accounts and "paid to engage" networks), such messaging often finds success by emphasising accusations of Western hypocrisy and appeals to solidarity among non-Western nations.<sup>32</sup>

### CONCERN OVER DISINFORMATION

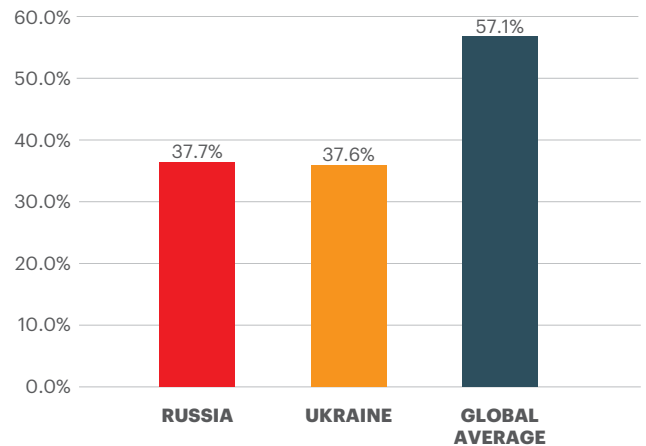
Crucially, well before the invasion, the use of disinformation on social media – particularly by Russian state and citizen actors – has been recognised as a key component of a longstanding warfare strategy that includes both information warfare and cyber warfare.<sup>33</sup> This disinformation strategy has contributed to confusion and destabilisation, particularly in eastern Ukraine, which facilitated Russia's takeover of much of the Donetsk region.<sup>34</sup>

As such, understanding Ukrainians' and Russians' level of worry about the information and messages they encounter online may help reveal the levels of suspicion and scepticism toward such information and messages. Figure 13 depicts the proportion of the Ukrainian and Russian populations expressing worry about encountering false information (or "fake news") on the internet or social media. Both Ukrainians and Russians were far below the global average in terms of concern about false information in 2019. Only 37.6 per cent of Ukrainians and 37.7 per cent of Russians said they were concerned, compared to a global average of 57.1 per cent.

FIGURE 13

### Worry about false information on the internet or social media, 2019

Only about 38 per cent of Russians and Ukrainians expressed worry about encountering false information online, compared to more than half of people globally.



Source: World Risk Poll

Such figures place Ukraine and Russia among the 12 surveyed countries with the lowest levels of worry about false information on the internet. Interestingly, lack of concern about this threat seems to be a regional tendency among former Soviet republics and Soviet satellite states. Of the 20 surveyed countries with the lowest levels of worry about false information on the internet, all but two – India and Bangladesh – are also either Central Asian or former Eastern Bloc countries.

## ANNEX A: LLOYD'S REGISTER FOUNDATION WORLD RISK POLL

The Lloyd's Register Foundation World Risk Poll is the first ever global study of worry and risk across the world. The poll is conducted by Gallup as part of its World Poll and is based on interviews with over 150,000 people, including those living in places where little or no official data exists, yet where reported risks are often high.

The World Risk Polls covers the biggest risks faced globally, including new findings on risks faced by women, safety of food, experiences of serious injury and violence and harassment in the workplace, climate change and online safety.

Undertaken every two years, the Poll reveals new insights. For example, it shows that demographic factors are generally a better predictor of risk perception than experience, and that, across the world, different groups of people experience risk in very different ways. It also highlights discrepancies between people's perception of risk and the actual likelihood of them experiencing those dangers.

The Poll aims to provide data and insights to help businesses, regulators, governments and academics to work with communities to develop policies and actions that save lives and make people feel safer.

### THE SAFETY PERCEPTIONS INDEX

This brief on Ukraine and Russia forms part of a broader collaboration between the Lloyd's Register Foundation and the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP).

This collaboration has seen the production of the first global **Safety Perceptions Index (SPI)**, as projected in Figure 14. The

purpose of the index is to better understand how perceptions of safety differ across countries, and how the different aspects of risk are connected. The SPI measures the levels of *worry, likelihood and experience of risk* across five domains: health, personal, violence, environment, and the workplace. These domains and themes are combined into a composite score which reflects perceptions of safety at the country level. A high score indicates a high level of concern with safety issues.

The first edition of the SPI finds that there are significant differences in the safety perceptions across countries and regions. In 2019, countries of the Russia and Eurasia region have the lowest levels of fear and worry, with nine of the 25 countries with lowest overall scores coming from this region. People were most fearful of falling victim to road accidents, followed by violent crime. However, the poll was completed just prior to COVID-19 pandemic and the fear of illness would likely have increased in 2021. Additionally, the risk from violent crime is substantially higher in South America than other regions, while mental health issues are the most significant risk in Europe and North America. Perceptions of risk are high across all domains in sub-Saharan Africa.

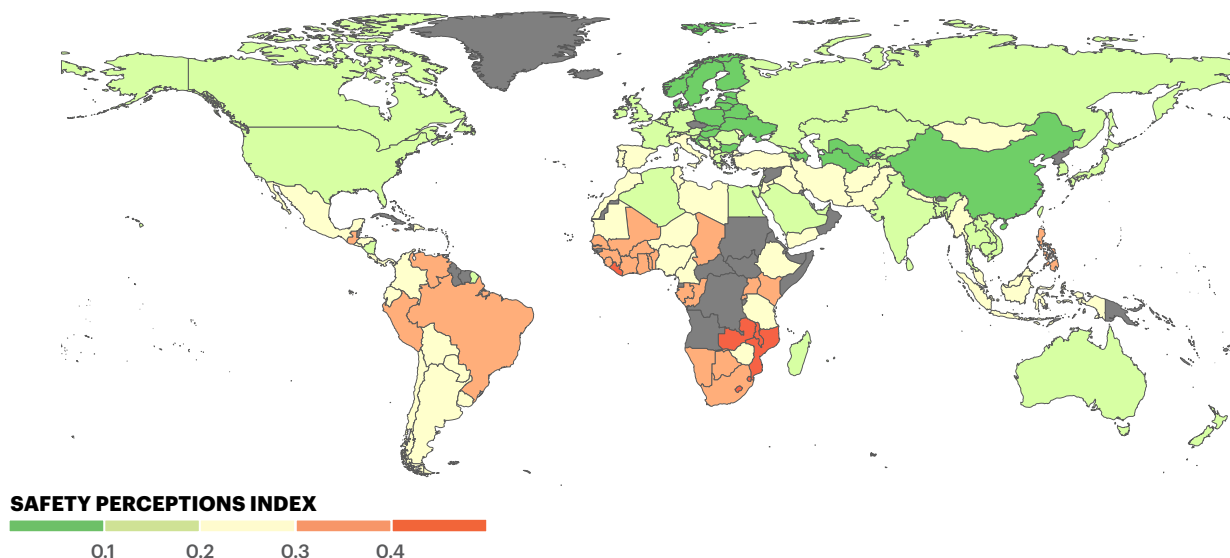
The second version of the SPI will include data comparisons of fears before and after the pandemic. It is due for release in the latter part of 2022.

As part of this work, IEP has released an R package to allow researchers and practitioners easy access to the data and various aggregations. This package can be installed from <https://github.com/githubIEP/wrp>. This packages will be updated with the second World Risk Poll wave when it is publically released later in 2022.

FIGURE 14

### Safety Perceptions Index, 2019

The Global SPI ranks 141 counties in the likelihood, experience and worry of risks across five domains: Food and Water Security, Mental Health, Violence, the Environment and Workplace Safety.



Source: World Risk Poll



## ENDNOTES

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