

# Youth in Russia: Transnational Experiences and Political Attitudes

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ASN Convention, New York, 2-4 May 2019

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## Introduction

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

On the one hand, youth attitudes provide insights into the expectations for which politicians have to offer a more long-term perspective. On the other hand, the younger generation is an important test group for assessing the Russian regime's success in shaping the population's opinions. The extent to which youth has been at the centre of the political attention in Russia is striking. By learning from the role of youth in a sequence of colour

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revolutions in Eastern Europe, organizations such as *Nashi* and *Rossiya Molodaya* were created to proactively mobilize and manage youth in an attempt to protect the country from internal and external threats to stability. Over time, the official strategy has changed: the high visibility of public displays of regime support based on a top-down organizational network since the immediate aftermath of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine has been replaced by more long-term measures to train youth as the carrier of the conservative social and political values propagated by the regime, for example through changes to the school curriculum with a particular emphasis on the teaching of history.

Moreover, the younger generation tends to be the most mobile part of society. In a recent Gallup poll, a record 20 per cent of the Russian population stated a desire to leave Russia and, in particular, young people want to leave.<sup>2</sup> Out-migration fuels the country's demographic imbalance and leads to a shortage of highly qualified labor. According to the poll, among 15-29-year-olds, a staggering 44 per cent indicated that they would like to move to another country: Germany (15 per cent) and the U.S. (12 per cent) were the most popular destinations mentioned. Voicing the intent to migrate does not equal actual emigration, but these numbers convey a facet of the widespread frustration about the country's current state of affairs.

Thus, youth in Russia plays an important and as yet underexplored role in Russian politics, while also actively contemplating emigration (or having migration experience already). Based on original data from our 2018 online survey of the younger generation in Russia (2,000 respondents aged 16-34)<sup>3</sup>, this paper focuses on the existing and potential transnational linkages of Russian youth. We analyze whether the transnational experiences of young Russians shape their views on domestic politics and foreign relations, as well as their migration intentions.

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<sup>2</sup>See [https://news.gallup.com/poll/248249/record-russians-say-leave-russia.aspx?g\\_source=link\\_NEWSV9&g\\_medium=TOPIC&g\\_campaign=item\\_&g\\_content=Record%252020%2525%2520of%2520Russians%2520Say%2520They%2520Would%2520Like%2520to%2520Leave%2520Russia](https://news.gallup.com/poll/248249/record-russians-say-leave-russia.aspx?g_source=link_NEWSV9&g_medium=TOPIC&g_campaign=item_&g_content=Record%252020%2525%2520of%2520Russians%2520Say%2520They%2520Would%2520Like%2520to%2520Leave%2520Russia)

<sup>3</sup> See also <https://www.zois-berlin.de/publikationen/zois-report/zois-report-12018/>

Our paper builds on different strands of the interconnected and multidisciplinary literature on transnationalism and regime change and the role of migrant networks. In this paper, we proceed as follows: we first locate our research questions within the existing scholarship before presenting our data and methodology and the findings of our data analysis. We find that transnational linkages matter for domestic and foreign policy preferences, the legitimacy of protest, and trust in political institutions. However, the effects vary across issues and institutions. Moreover, those young people who contemplate emigration tend to have transnational experiences already.

## Literature

### *Transnationalism and social networks*

Migrants have increasingly been defined as ‘norm entrepreneurs’ and transnational agents of social change (Glick Schiller et al., 1992; Itzigsohn et al., 1999; Levitt 1998, 2001). The so-called ‘development-migration nexus’ (Kapur, 2004) gradually gave rise to discussions about a ‘democratization-migration’ nexus (Rüland et al., 2009). Scholars have argued that migrants as ‘new and unaccounted power groups’ (Itzigsohn & Villacres, 2008) and ‘vectors of (...) mass-level (...) democratic diffusion’ (Pérez-Armendáriz & Crow, 2010). Socio-demographic factors, the level of integration into the host society, migrant social networks and destination characteristics have been highlighted as determinants of migrant transnational engagement, but research on its effects has remained inconclusive.

For example, Guarnizo et al. (2003) found that the size of diaspora networks is positively related to homeland political engagement, while the physical location of diaspora networks does not matter. Other scholars have highlighted the role of destination characteristics in shaping migrant partisan preferences, voter turnout and different forms of transnational engagement (Ahmadov and Sasse 2016; Doyle and Fidrmuc 2004; Escobar, Arana, and McCann 2014, 2015; Lafleur and Sánchez-Domínguez 2015; Leal, Lee, and McCann 2012).

Social networks generally function as trusted channels of information (Bakewell et al. 2015; Farre and Fasani 2013; Lohmann 1993; Newton 1999; Snow and Benford 1992). The ties anchored in these social networks have been found to significantly influence an individual's choice to mobilize, to protest, or migrate ((Diani and McAdam 2003b; D. McKenzie and Rapoport 2007; Toma and Vause 2014). Migration scholars distinguish between migration networks facilitating migration through information as well as financial and social support (Bade 2003; Haug 2008; Massey and Espana 1987), and migrant networks describing the social interactions between migrants in the destination country or the linkages between migrants and their families and friends „at home“ (Bommes 2011; Krawatzek and Sasse, 2018). Empirical studies tend to operationalize migrant networks as an independent variable explaining, for example, the degree of integration into the host society, engagement with the homeland, and the transfer of different types of remittances.

Granovetter's premise of the strength of weak ties (1973), seen as more important for communication and social mobility than strong transitive ties to family members and friends, tends to be confirmed by migration scholars. However, the varying definitions of „weak ties“ – ranging from people helping to find jobs for newly arrived migrants (Elrick and Lewandowska 2008) to distant family relations and acquaintances (Liu 2013) make it hard to generalize about the type and depth of a migrant's social ties.

Research on the social and political impacts of financial remittances has remained inconclusive: on the one hand, remittances may provide the resources required for electoral and non-electoral political action in the country of origin, including protests (Barry et al. 2014; Miller and Ritter 2014; Regan and Frank 2014). On the other hand, greater independence from the state tied to the receipt of remittances can foster political acquiescence (Doyle 2015). Migration research introduced the concept 'social remittances' (Levitt 2001) to complement the discussion about financial remittances and point to the norms, practices, identities, and social capital transmitted through migration. The original conceptualization is very broad – and over time it was further widened to go beyond unidirectional flows from the host society

to the place of origin. Instead the focus switched to a more dynamic understanding of the interactions between actors in different place (Lacroix et al. 2016; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011; Nowicka and Šerbedžija 2016). For example, the discussion has been extended to the influence of return migrants in their places of origin (Goldring 2004). More

Recently, the term „political remittances“ has been used to further differentiate between the more intangible remittances and to highlight the political content and potential impact of remittances resulting from political engagement (e.g extraterritorial voting or financial support for a political course) and the transmission of political principles, vocabulary and practices (Krawatzek and Müller-Funk 2019). Migrants may also influence the political participation of those who stayed „at home“ (Ahmadov and Sasse 2016; Germano 2013; Meseguer, Lavezzolo, and Aparicio 2016; Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow 2010). Rooted in the IR literature on norm diffusion, Keck and Sikkink have pointed to the need to also understand these types of flows as grassroots phenomena (Keck and Sikkink 1998). These various approaches fit the conceptualizations of “transnational social spaces” or “transnational social fields”, two terms that describe sets of social relations and provide migrants with the framing of their identity and behaviour. (Basch et al. 1994, Faist 2000, Glick Schiller et al. 1992, Pries 2001, Risse-Kappen 1995, Vertovec 2009, Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002).

In our analysis of Russian youth, we take the multidirectional flows of remittances seriously and refocus the discussion about transnationalism and social remittances on what is being received by those who have not (yet) migrated but might contemplate leaving. We hypothesize that the main determinants of transnational political engagement of migrants mentioned above also influence the attitudes of those who are still based in the country of origin but have active links to those who left or have other transnational experiences. We thus refocus the discussion about transnationalism and social/political remittances on what is being received by those who have not (yet) migrated but might contemplate leaving.

We go a step further than previous scholarship by extending the notion of „transnational experiences“ beyond the personal experience of migration to also include links with family or friends (here referred to as „close ties“) who have migrated, receive financial remittances, and have travel experiences. We also test for the role of migrant networks

and destination as factors shaping the attitudes, preferences and behaviour of the younger generation in Russia. And lastly, we also include foreign policy references in our analysis, thereby going beyond the standard focus on domestic politics in the origin countries in the research on migrant transnational engagement.

## **Data and research design**

At the Berlin-based Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS), we conducted a survey in 2018 in cooperation with the agency R-Rsearch that focused on the younger age cohort (see also <https://www.zois-berlin.de/publikationen/zois-report/zois-report-12018/>). Our online survey, conducted shortly after the presidential elections in March 2018, includes 2,018 respondents aged 16-34 and is based in the 15 largest regional cities of the Russian Federation. The quota-based sample traces a wide range of characteristics, attitudes and behavioural patterns related to socio-political issues and the respondents' transnational experiences.

## ***Dependent Variables***

To measure transnational links, we used variables on three different scales. First, respondents were asked whether they currently had family or friends living in one of the following regions: USA/Canada, the European Union (EU), the former Soviet Union (FSU), Asia, or elsewhere in Russia. Second, they were asked whether they themselves had lived or worked over the last year in one of the respective regions, and third, whether they had received financial help from friends or family members living in those regions. Each of those three items (family/friends, live/work, financial aid) could be answered with "yes" or "no", and each of those variables was coded to a dummy variable (yes=1; no=0). A second question asked whether respondents had travelled beyond Russia during the past 12 months; this variable was coded to a dummy (yes=1; no=0).

Out of those four items, two different count-variables were generated measuring the extent of a respondent's overall transnational exposure. One count variable measured whether a respondent had family/friends and/or lived/worked in and/or received remittances from a certain region. For example, the variable *transnat\_Asia* has a 1 for every respondent who has family/friends in Asia, and/or has lived/worked in Asia, and/or received remittances from Asia. The second type of variable combined a respondent's overall transnational experience: in this variable, called "transnational\_count", any type of transnational experience (family/friends, living/working, remittances), as well as travel experience were counted. Thus, the more connections a respondent has to foreign countries, the higher their value on this count-variable.

Second, we wanted to know more about respondents' foreign policy preferences. Respondents were asked with which one country they would like to see Russia to have closer relations. This was an open question, i.e. respondents could name any country. The answers to this question were later grouped into four categories: USA/Canada, Asia, EU, FSU, and elsewhere in Russia. For each of those categories, dummy variables were created with a 1 referring to one of the regions.

From the original variable on foreign relations preferences, a further dummy variable was created with a 1 for all OECD countries in the original answer variable, and a 0 for all other countries. Additionally, a variable was created that sorted countries from the foreign relation variable according to their level of democracy. In order to do so, the Polity VI index from 2017 was used, ranging from -10 to 10.<sup>4</sup> The foreign-relations answers were sorted according to the level that had been assigned on the polity VI scale.

Voting preferences were introduced as a dummy variable (1= for all respondents who had voted for Vladimir Putin in March 2018 and a 0 for everyone who had voted for someone else). Furthermore, respondents were asked about their main media used to obtain news and information. The survey also asked the following question: "In principle, do you consider participation in protests a legitimate form of political participation?". Those who answered

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<sup>4</sup> The following countries/regions did not have a polity score for 2017: Iceland, Dubai, EU, Kazachstan (only data for 2016)

“yes, in all cases” or “yes, in some cases” were coded as 1, and those who said “no, never” were coded as 0.

A final battery of questions on political attitudes probed the respondents’ trust in several institutions, such as the Russian army, the Russian security forces, non-governmental organizations, the Russian Orthodox Church, Russian mass media, the local mayor and local councillors, the regional governor, and the Russian President. The answer categories “Do not trust at all” and “Rather do not trust” were collapsed to 0, and the answer categories “Rather trust” and “Fully trust” were collapsed to 1, thus making for another dummy variable.

Lastly, we wanted to know about our respondent’s propensity to migrate. A dummy variable asked respondents whether they were currently thinking about leaving the place they were living in (yes=1; no=0). In a follow-up question, they were asked where they would prefer to go. The following answer categories were given: Moscow, other region in Russia, other country of FSU, an EU country, USA or Canada, or an Asian country beyond FSU. Each answer category was recoded to a dummy variable with a 1 for the respective category, and a 0 for all other categories.

## **Control Variables**

Standard sociodemographic variables were introduced as control variables. Age was introduced as a continuous variable ranging from 16 to 34. Gender was measured using a dummy variable (male=1; female=0). Wealth was measured by using the responses to the question about the respondents’ ability to afford certain goods. This variable ranged from 1 (“There is not enough money even for food”) to 7 (“We experience no material difficulties, if needed we could acquire an apartment”) and was introduced as a continuous variable. Furthermore, a simplified variable indicating the educational level of the respondent was introduced, reducing a nine-level scale to a dummy variable: the levels “Full higher education with a diploma”, “Full higher education with more than one degree” and “Full higher education with a degree candidate, doctor of science” were combined under the value 1, all lower educational levels were coded to zero.

Measuring the urban context of a respondent, a dummy variable was generated with a 1 for all respondents living in Moscow or in St. Petersburg, and a 0 for all respondents living in other regional cities. Furthermore, a dummy variable was introduced measuring whether a respondent had children under the age of 16 (1=yes; 0=no). Church attendance was captured by a variable that asked respondents how often they attend church. This variable was a 5-level variable ranging from 0 “never or almost never” to 4 “few times a week”, and this variable was introduced as a continuous variable.

Lastly, respondents were asked about the main source of their information about politics. They list of different sources included Russian television, Russian radio, newspapers, Facebook and so forth. The most dominant category was Russian television, which was singled out and recoded to a dummy variable, having a 1 for everybody for whom Russian television was a first choice and a 0 for everyone who uses other sources of information.

### ***Analytical Strategy***

Three different models were calculated to address the different aspects of our research. The first model investigated the characteristics of people with transnational links. In the second model, we wanted to know more about the connection between political attitudes and transnational links. In a third step, we examined characteristics of people willing to migrate.

### ***Model 1***

In a first step, we wanted to know more about the profile of people who have transnational links. Our first model used variables on the respondents’ transnational links as dependent variables (dummy variables checking for family/friends, live/work, financial aid). Six different regression models were calculated measuring transnational experiences in each of the following regions: Asia, EU, FSU, USA or Canada, elsewhere in Russia, or none of the

above. As those variables were dummy-coded, logistic regression models were computed.<sup>5</sup> The following sociodemographic variables were introduced as controls: age, gender, wealth, education, urban/rural (i.e. the Moscow/St. Petersburg dummy variable), and having children.

Second, we wanted to know about the sociodemographic profile of those who had any kind of transnational link, using the count-variable on transnationalism as a dependent variable. The goodness-of-fit chi-squared test was insignificant, which indicates that the data is not characterised by overdispersion. Therefore, we performed a Poisson regression with the transnational count-variable as the dependent variable and the sociodemographic variables as control variables. Incidence-rate ratios are reported (see below).

## Model 2

Our second model explored the connection between transnational links and political attitudes. First, we wanted to know more about the factors that determine which country/region a respondent would like Russia to have closer relations with: Asia, EU, FSU and USA/Canada. Each of those dummy-variables was introduced in a logistic regression model as a dependent variable. In each respective regression model, the following control variables were used: age, gender, wealth, education, urban/rural, as well as the respondent's travel experience and their media consumption (dummy-variable Russian\_TV). Furthermore, in each of the regressions we introduced a region-specific transnational variable. For example, in the regression model with the EU as a preferred region for foreign relations, we included a variable that measured whether a respondent had family/friends, living/working experience or financial aid from the EU ("yes" to any of those three options resulting in the value 1).

Furthermore, in separate models we introduced two dependent variables that had grouped the foreign-relations-variable into (a) OECD-countries and (b) democratic countries (according to Polity VI). In those two variables, instead of using the region-specific transnational variables, we used the overall transnational count-variable as a continuous independent variable. the OECD-variable was dummy-coded, so a logistic regression was

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<sup>5</sup> Logistic regression results are reported in Odds Ratios.

performed. The Polity-based variable on regime type ranged from -10 to 10 and was interpreted as a continuous variable; thus, a standard linear regression was performed.

With regard to the respondents' take on basic political principles, we asked whether they considered protests generally legitimate, and whether people had voted for Vladimir Putin. Those two dummy variables were introduced as dependent variables in logistic regression models with the same control variables as in the OECD and Polity regressions. We asked a whole battery of questions about the respondents' trust in various institutions. Eight dummy-variables on trust in various Russian institutions were introduced as dependent variables. Age, gender, wealth, education, urban/rural, kids, church attendance, and the transnational count variable we used as controls.

### **Model 3**

A third question we wanted to tackle the migration potential is: who are the people who are thinking about leaving the place they are currently living in, and where would they like to go. First, we performed a logistic regression on the dummy-variable measuring whether respondents are thinking about leaving. The following control variables were used: age, gender, wealth, education, urban context, kids, church attendance, media consumption (Russian TV dummy), voted for Putin, and the transnational count variable. The same models were used in the case of the dependent variables referring to various migration destinations, such as Asia, FSU, EU etc.

### **Results**

In the following, we first discuss descriptive statistics of our dependent variables, and then the significant results of our regression models. Results of logistic regression models are expressed in Odds Ratios, results of the Poisson regression in Incidence-Rate Ratios, and linear regression results are expressed as standard regression coefficients.

## ***Descriptives***

Figure 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the respondents' transnational links by region. Recall that those variables summarize transnational links in a respective region, such as having family/friends, having lived or worked, or receiving remittances from a certain region. A 'yes' to one, two or three of those three options results in a 'yes' on the summarized variable.

[Figure 1 about here](#)

The majority of respondents do not have any of the three transnational links to foreign countries (between 80 and 90 per cent). Yet, around 20 per cent of the respondents have links to the EU and to FSU countries, whereas only around 12 per cent have links to the USA or Canada and around 6 per cent have links to Asian countries. Ties to elsewhere in Russia are stronger, with almost half of the respondents (44 per cent) having at least one transnational connection to somewhere else in Russia.

Figure 2 presents descriptive statistics of the transnational count variable. This variable counts a respondent's links to any region under any of the three options (family/friends, living/working, remittances) as well as whether the respondent has travel experience. It demonstrates that almost half of the respondents (44 per cent) have no transnational links or travel experience at all; yet, 27 per cent have one transnational link or travel experience, and 15 per cent have two. The largest count number of transnational links in our dataset is eight.

[Figure 2 about here](#)

Figure 3 presents the respondents' foreign policy preferences. The region most favoured for close relations with Russia was Asia, with around 37 per cent of respondents saying that they would like Russia to have closer relations with Asia. The USA/Canada, the EU and FSU countries are similarly popular among respondents (about 20 per cent). Only just below 7 per cent of respondents favour another region for closer foreign relations. More specifically, the most frequently mentioned individual country is China (28 per cent), followed by the U.S (19 per cent). With 7 per cent Germany is the most important EU country singled

out by Russian youth. Taken together, all the EU member states mentioned by the respondents come close to the 19 per cent prioritizing relations with the U.S. At first glance, this picture seems to reflect an orientation informed by perceptions of international economic and political influence – because or despite of the role both countries play in the political and public discourse in Russia.

66 per cent of our respondents favour closer relations with non-OECD countries, while only 34 per cent favour closer relations with OECD countries (see Figure 4). Yet, as Figure 5 demonstrates, more than half of the respondents wish for closer connections with more democratic countries), and only a third favours stronger relations with non-democratic countries.

[Figures 3, 4 and 5 about here](#)

Next, we wanted to know whether respondents consider protest a legitimate form of political participation. Figure 6 demonstrates that most respondents think that in some cases protest is legitimate (64 per cent) and 27 per cent think that protest is legitimate in all cases. Only about 10 per cent consider protest outright illegitimate.

[Figure 6 about here](#)

A clear majority of respondents report having voted for Vladimir Putin (67 per cent, see Figure 7). The second most popular candidate was Pavel Grudinin (14 per cent), Vladimir Zhirinovsky (8 per cent) and Ksenia Sobchak (6 per cent). All other candidates received less than 2 per cent of the vote of our respondents.

[Figure 7 about here](#)

Figure 8 sums up the respondents' varying trust in a wide range of institutions. For instance, between 50 and 60 per cent of respondents do not trust or rather do not trust the mayor, the governor, the church, and the media. On the other hand, only around 30 per cent do not trust (or rather do not trust) the president, the army, security forces and NGOs. The latter category presents a counterintuitive mixture of governmental and non-governmental organizations.

### Figure 8 about here

57 per cent of our respondents are currently thinking about leaving the place they are living in (see Figure 9). The majority (40 per cent) would like to move to other regions in Russia, 23 per cent to a country within the European Union, and 15 per cent to the USA or Canada.

### Figures 9 and 10 about here

## Regression Results

### Model 1

First, we wanted to know about the profile of those who have transnational links (Table 1). We found that higher education had a significant positive effect on all four transnational destinations: chances to have links to Asia were increased by 96 per cent, to the EU by 84 per cent, to FSU countries by 38 per cent and to the USA/Canada by 42 per cent.

Table 1. Factors determining transnational links

	Transnational links in...*						Transnational count variable†
	Asia	EU	FSU	USA	None	Elsewhere in Russia	
Age					1.053**		0.982***
Male			1.273*		0.479***		
Wealth		1.130*					1.108***
Higher education	1.962**	1.835***	1.381*	1.417*			1.499***
Moscow / St. Petersburg			1.611***	1.585**	0.581***		1.511***
Kids							
Observations	1999	1999	1999	1999	1999	1999	1999

x: Logistic regression z: Poisson regression

\* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

With each higher value on the wealth-variable, chances were increased by 13 per cent to have

transnational links with the EU. Male respondents had 27.3 higher odds than women to have links to FSU countries. Furthermore, being based in Moscow or St. Petersburg increased chances (compared to being based somewhere else) by 61 per cent for personal links to FSU countries and 59 per cent with the USA/Canada.

The chances of not having any transnational ties at all were increased for older respondents (by 5 per cent each year of age), reduced for male respondents by 52 per cent, and reduced for people living in Moscow or St. Petersburg by 42 per cent. No independent variable predicted a significant change in the dependent variable measuring links to “elsewhere in Russia”.

The Poisson regression revealed that for every year of age, the incidence-rate ratio is decreased by 1.8 per cent with regard to any kind of transnational links. The incident-ratio of the wealthy is increased by 10.8 per cent and for more highly educated respondents by 49.9 per cent, and for people living in Moscow or St. Petersburg by 51.1 per cent.

## **Model 2**

In our second model, we found transnational links to be closely connected to foreign policy attitudes. Table 2 shows the regression results for the foreign relations variables as dependent variables. With the exception of Asia, transnational linkages were a positive predictor in all other regions for a person’s expressed hope for Russia to have closer relations with this country: transnational links to the EU increased the chances (by 78 per cent) to wish for closer relations with the EU; transnational links to FSU countries increased chances by 91 per cent; and linkages to the USA/Canada increased the chances to wish for closer relations with these two countries by 57 per cent.

Table 2. Foreign relations

Russia should have closer relations with....	Asia	EU	FSU	USA
Transnational (respective region)		1.775***	1.907***	1.573*
Age	1.031*			0.941***
Male	0.709**			1.511**
Wealth				
Higher education				
Moscow / St. Petersburg	0.694**		1.380*	
Travel experience	0.605***			1.338*
Russian TV	1.490**			0.632**
Observations	1430	1430	1430	1430

NOTE: Logistic regression, dependent variables are dummy-coded  
 \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Closer relations with Asia were desired by older respondents (3 per cent for each year of age), by female respondents (chances for men reduced by 29 per cent), people not living in Moscow or St. Petersburg (chances reduced for people living in Moscow/St. Petersburg by the factor 0.694). Chances were also reduced for people with travel experience by the factor 0.605 and increased by 49 per cent for those who chose Russian TV as their primary source of information. The chances to say that Russia should have closer connections with other FSU countries were increased by 38 per cent for people living in Moscow or St. Petersburg

Age significantly reduced chances by the factor 0.941 to say that Russia should have closer relations with USA or Canada; also, chances were reduced for those using Russia TV as their first source information by 36.8 percent compared to those using different sources of information. Male respondents had by 51.1 percent higher chances than female respondents to favour USA and Canada, and people with travel experience had a by 33.8 percent increased chance.

Overall, any kind of transnational experience (as expressed in the transnational count variable) increased chances to favour closer relations with OECD countries by 16 per cent. This

was also true for the more highly educated (by 32 per cent), while age was negatively associated with this choice: with every year of age, chances were reduced by 3 per cent to favour OECD relations.

Table 3 shows the results for regressions on relations with OECD countries, democracies/authoritarian regimes (Polity), the perceived legitimacy of protests and voting behaviour. The level of democracy within a preferred country of foreign relations is measured based on the Polity VI index. The linear regression model demonstrates that with each step on the scale of transnational experience, the score on the Polity-scale significantly increased by an average value of 0.471. Furthermore, with every year of age, people moved on average 0.136 down on the Polity scale of a country's democracy level, and people living in Moscow or St Petersburg scored 1.126 higher on the scale.

Table 3. Political attitudes

	OECD <sup>x</sup>	Polity <sup>y</sup>	Protest is legitimate <sup>x</sup>	Voted for Putin <sup>x</sup>
Transnational count	1.156**	0.471*	1.303*	0.845*
Age	0.972*	-0.136*		
Male				0.660*
Wealth				
Higher education	1.323*			0.621*
Moscow / St. Petersburg		1.126*	0.563*	
Kids				1.455*
Church attendance				
Observations	1338	938	732	756

x: Logistic regression, dependent variable is dummy-coded

z: Linear regression

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Next, we wanted to know whether people considered participation in protest legitimate. Chances increased with each step on the transnational count variable (by 30 per cent) to say

that protests are legitimate, and chances were decreased for those living in Moscow or St. Petersburg by 43 per cent.

With respect to voting behaviour, the more transnational linkage a person has, the lower the chances to have voted for Vladimir Putin (each additional transnational link reduced chances by 16 per cent). Men were significantly less likely to have voted for Putin (by 34 per cent), similarly people with a higher level of education (by 38 per cent). For people with children, chances were increased by 46 per cent. Table 4 sums up the results for all the trust-related regressions. The higher the density of a respondent's transnational links, the lower their trust in the following four institutions: the Russian Orthodox Church (decreased by 15.7 per cent), the local mayors (decreased by 14 per cent), the security forces (decreased by 17 per cent) and voluntary organizations (by 12 per cent).

Moreover, with each year of age, chances are increased (by 3 per cent) to trust the Russian church, while chances to trust security forces are decreased by 3 per cent. Male respondents have 27 per cent higher chances to trust the mass media, but 24 per cent lower chances to trust the Russian president. They are 29 per cent less likely to trust the security forces, and 41 less likely than women to trust voluntary organizations. With each step on the wealth-scale the chances to trust the local mayor are increased (by 17 per cent); trust in Russian mass media increased (by 13 per cent), and the Russian president by 13 per cent. A higher educational level is associated with lower trust in the Russian church (likelihood decreased by 45 per cent) and the Russian president (38 per cent). Having children increases the chances to trust the Russian army (by 40 per cent), the Russian mass media (by 34 per cent), and voluntary organizations by 44 per cent. People who attend church regularly have naturally have higher trust in the Russian Orthodox church (78 per cent) the mass media (18

per cent) and voluntary organizations (23 per cent).

Table 4. Trust in Russian institutions

	Army	Church	Governor	Mayor	Mass media	President	Security forces	Volunteer organizations
Transnational count		0.843***		0.865**			0.831***	0.880*
Age		1.030*					0.967*	
Male					1.265*	0.757*	0.707**	0.591***
Wealth				1.168**	1.130*	1.126*		
Higher education		0.549***				0.613**		
Moscow / St. Petersburg								
Kids	1.403*				1.338*			1.441*
Church attendance		1.778***			1.177*			1.234**
Observations	1287	1251	1217	1251	1269	1279	1285	1269

NOTE: Logistic regression, dependent variables are dummy-coded  
 \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

### Model 3

Table 5 displays the results of the regression analysis concerned with migration. Various factors significantly predict the propensity to leave the current place of residence according to our survey. For each step on the transnational count variable, the likelihood that a respondent is thinking about migration increases by 26 per cent. Male respondents are less likely than women to contemplate migration (chances reduced by 31 per cent), as are people with a higher education level (chances reduced by 31 per cent), people living in Moscow or St. Petersburg (chances reduced by 37 per cent); and people using Russian TV as their primary source of information (chances reduced by 34 per cent). The wealthier the respondents are, the lower their chances (reduced by 22 per cent for each step on the wealth-scale) to say that they are thinking about leaving their current place of residence.

Table 5. Migration

	Think about leaving	Where would you prefer to go?						
		Asia	EU	FSU	Moscow	Russia	USA	Other
Transnational count	1.260**	2.392**		1.598*		0.661***		
Age								
Male	0.695*							
Wealth	0.785***							
Higher education	0.692*							
Moscow / St. Petersburg	0.627**		2.910***		0.195**			
Kids								
Church attendance								
Russian TV	0.664*			4.174*	2.242*			
Voted for Putin	0.469***		0.319***			1.870*		
Observations	732	334	334	334	334	334	334	334

NOTE: Logistic regression, dependent variables are dummy-coded

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ 

Transnational links significantly predict migration destinations in three cases: each higher step on the transnational scale increases the propensity to go to Asia by the factor 2.4; to FSU countries by 59.8 percent; and it reduces chances to go to other places in Russia by 33.9 percent.

People living in Moscow or St. Petersburg have 2.91 times the chances compared to people living elsewhere to say that they would like to move to the EU. Those who use Russian TV as their main source of information have 4.17 times the chances compared to all others to contemplate living in other FSU countries, and 2.24 the chances to want to go to Moscow. Having voted for Putin increases chances to want to move within Russia by 87 per cent, while it decreases chances to want to move to the EU by 68 per cent.

## Conclusion

The analysis presented in this paper proceeded in three logical steps. It first unpacked the profile of those young Russians who have transnational experiences, including but not limited to personal migration experiences. Sociodemographic factors highlighted in migration studies generally, also apply in this case: higher education and income levels and gender are significant determinants of transnational exposure.

At the heart of the paper was the question about transnational linkages being associated with domestic and foreign policy preferences. We find that the direction and extent of transnational exposure is indeed a significant driver of the reported foreign policy preferences. Disentangling the various types of transnational linkages, we find that in particular those who have family members living in a particular country or region favour Russia's closer relationship with that country or region. The effects are strongest for relations with the EU, the U.S. and Canada, and the Former Soviet Union, i.e. personal experiences (and prior socialization) trump regime type considerations. Thus, Granovetter thesis does not hold in this regard, and it is precisely the strong ties that predict foreign policy preferences and attitudes on domestic politics, namely the idea of protest legitimacy and trust in institutions. The paper thereby illustrates that the "transnational social field" needs to include those (still) living in the origin countries with other transnational experiences short of emigration.

Lastly, the paper has identified existing transnational links predicting migration intentions. Women are significantly more likely to state a desire to leave the country. Moreover, it is the less well-off and the less educated and those who live in cities other than Moscow or St. Petersburg who would like to leave (though they might not be the ones who have the necessary resources to migrate). Conversely, those who voted for Putin and those who rely on state TV as their main source of information are less likely to leave.

Our statistical analysis shows that those who would like to move to an EU country are significantly less likely to have voted for Putin and tend to live in Moscow or St. Petersburg. The latter points to the international connectedness of the two cities. Having few transnational ties predicts a desire to move within Russia, whereas those with a denser

transnational network voice the intention to go abroad, including to other countries of the Former Soviet Union. An additional more fine-grained analysis of the direction of each of the recorded transnational linkages, including the issue of chosen regime type, would be necessary in order to unpack these dynamics further.

In conclusion, the pressure on the Russian regime to deliver more than saber-rattling rhetoric and socioeconomic promises is high. The large protests in the run-up to the presidential elections in March 2018 and, in particular, against the pension reforms in 2018 clearly illustrated the level of dissatisfaction with socio-economic conditions and the regime's difficulties in judging and managing societal expectations. The recent Gallup survey as well as our ZOIS survey show that in particular the young are a cohort with a strong desire to leave Russia. We cannot predict if and when migration intentions might materialize but migration intentions alone send an important signal to the regime: it needs to find an answer to the unfulfilled expectations of the younger generation in order not to turn the migration intentions of the highly skilled into actual emigration and prevent transnational linkages from turning the perception of the legitimacy of protest into actual mobilization. In the short run, this requires at least a new narrative to appeal to young people across the country, in the longer run, it requires reforms. In the meantime, the already existing transnational linkages will continue to influence the likelihood of turning an intention into a decision to migrate and to shape domestic and foreign policy preferences.

Figure 1  
Transnational links to...

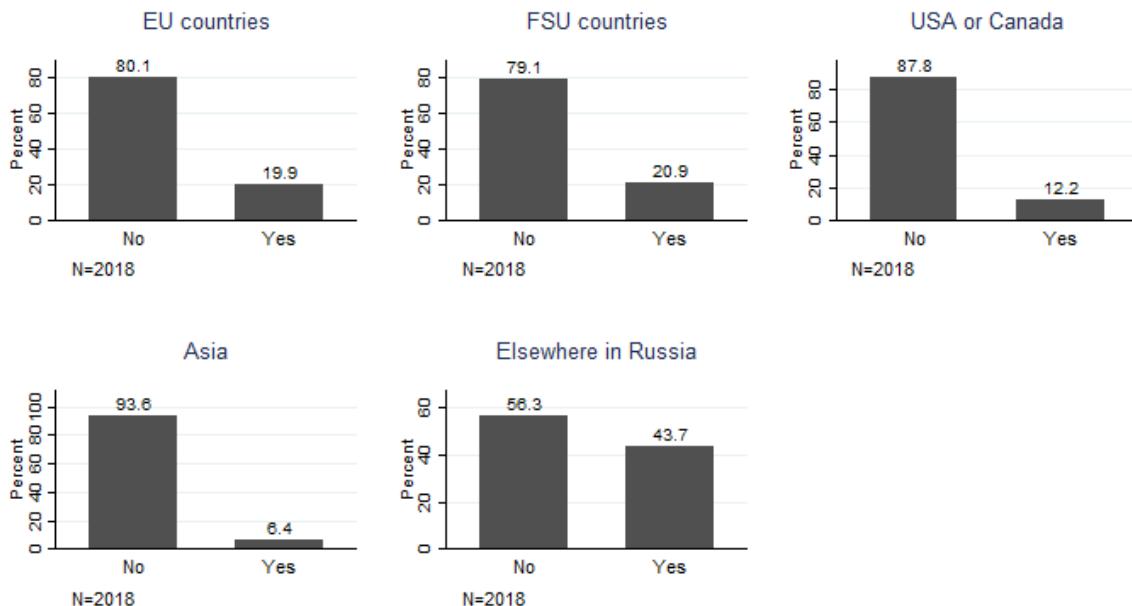


Figure 2  
Count of transnational links

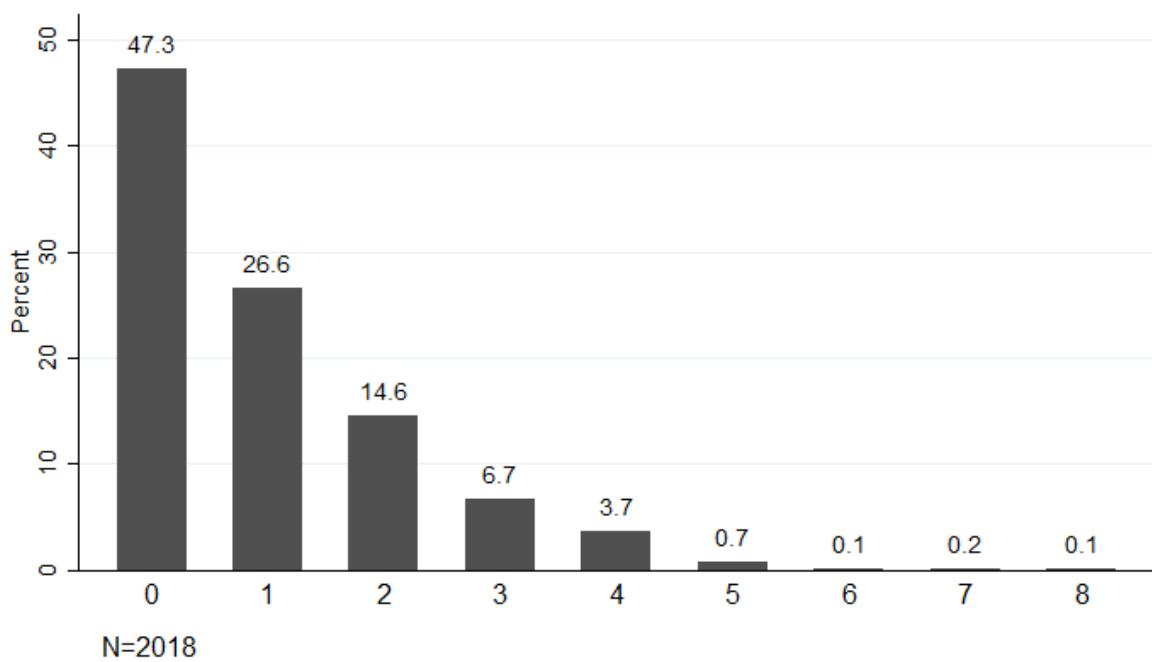


Figure 3

With which region would you like  
Russia to have closer relations?

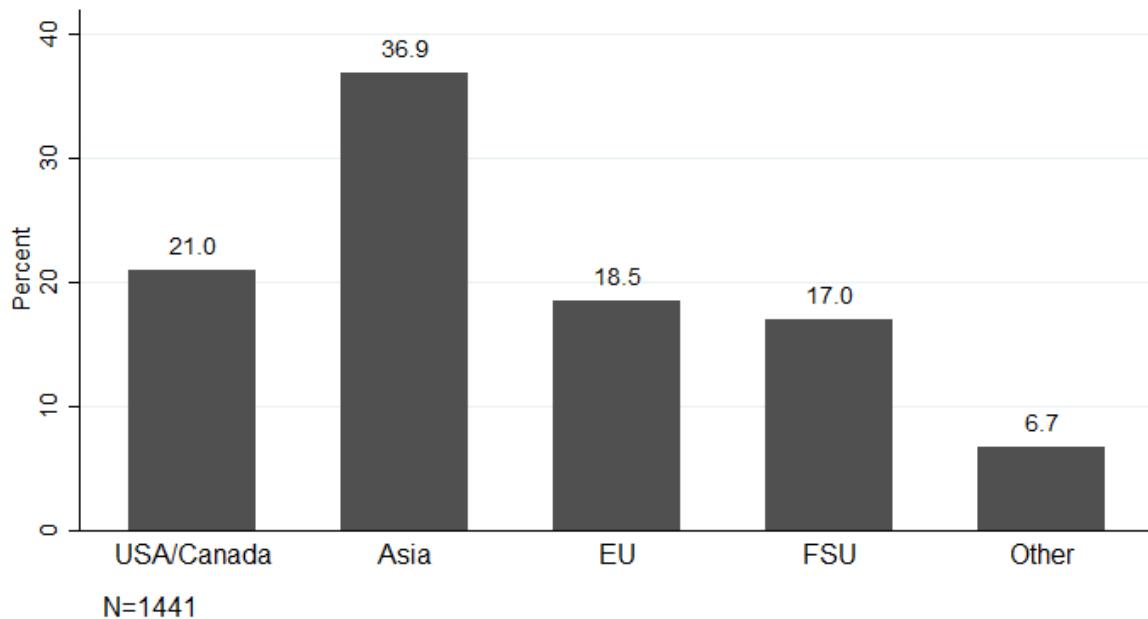


Figure 5

Foreign relations according to democratic level of a country

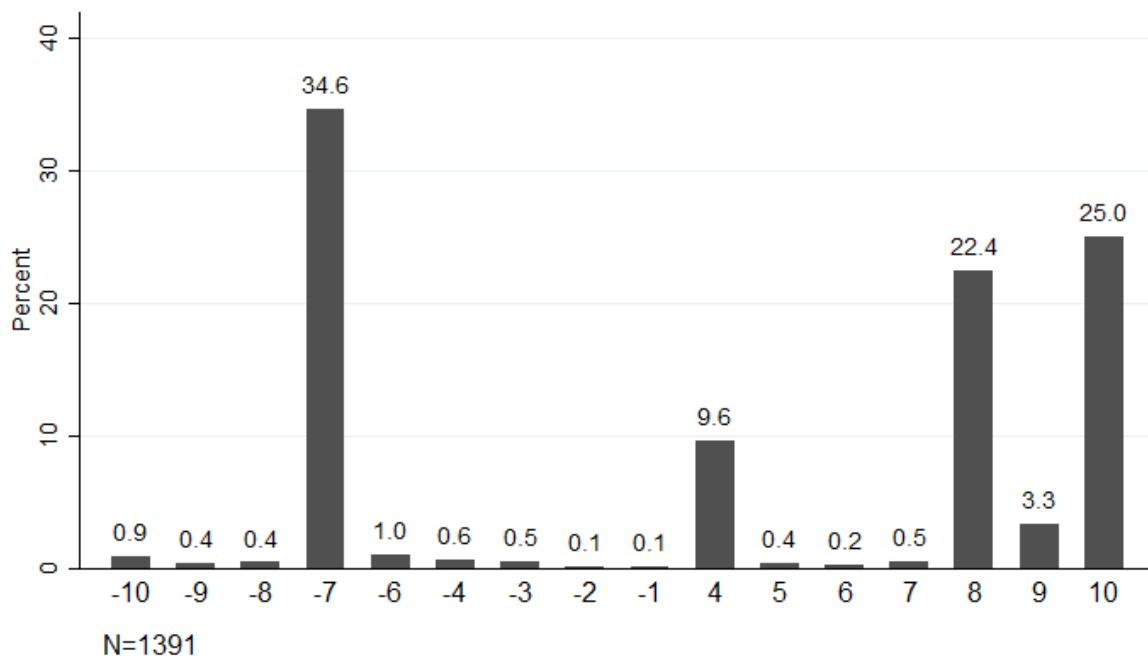


Figure 6

In principle, do you consider participation in protests  
a legitimate form of political participation?

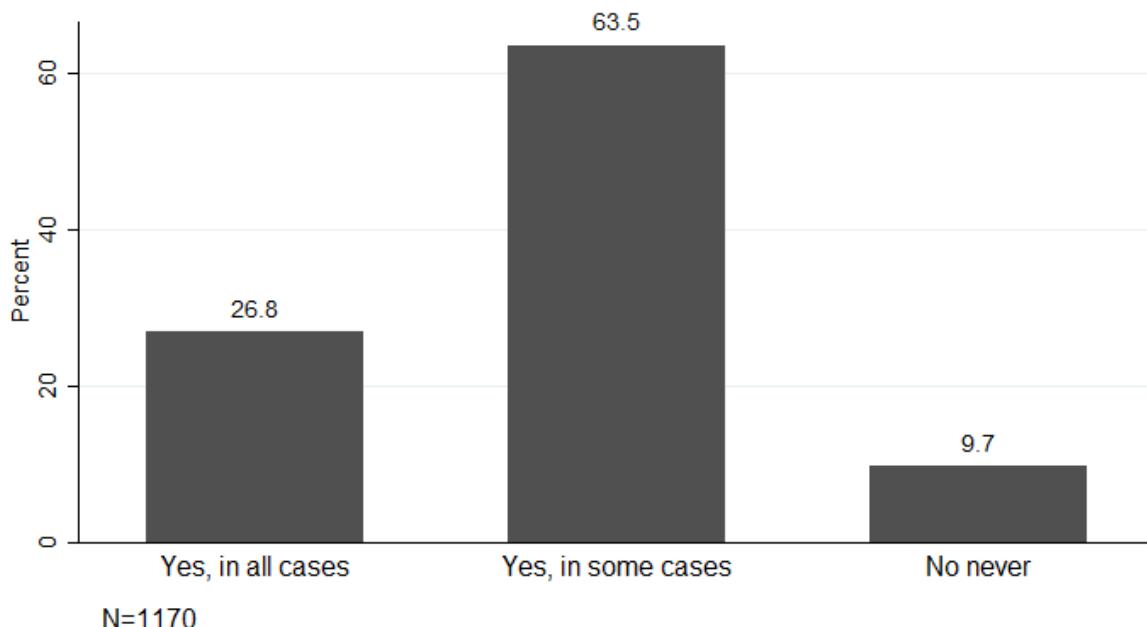
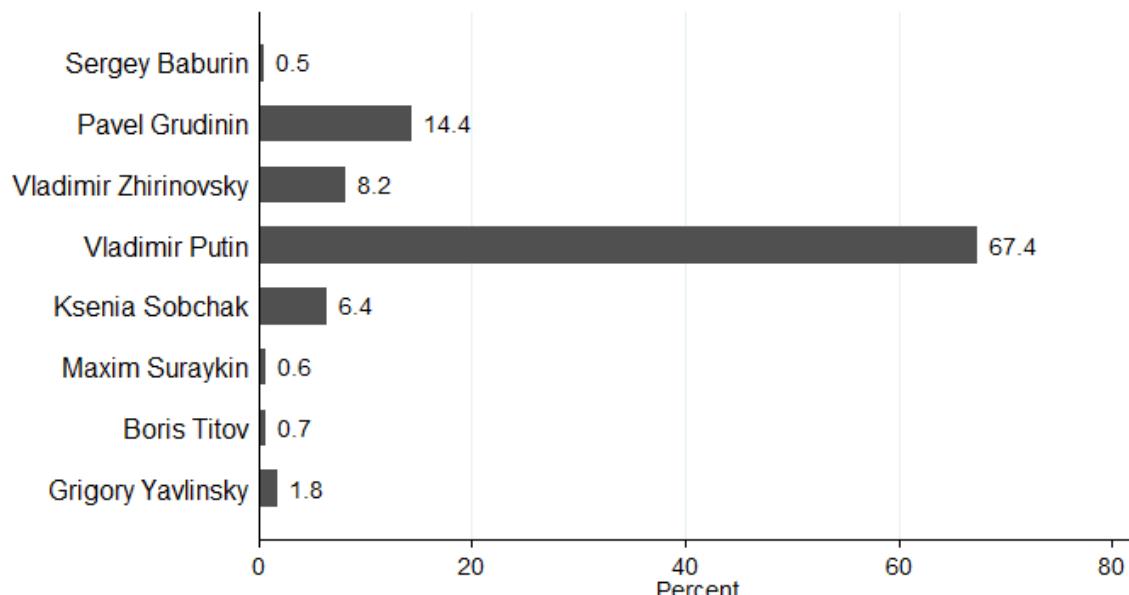
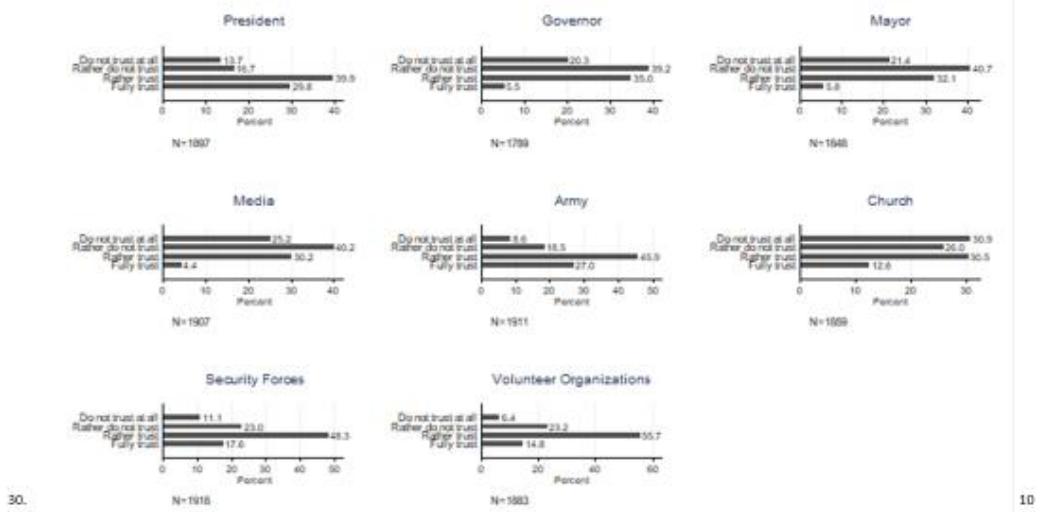


Figure 7

Whom did you vote for in 2018?



**Figure 8**  
**How much trust do you have in...**



**Figure 10**  
**Where would you prefer to go?**

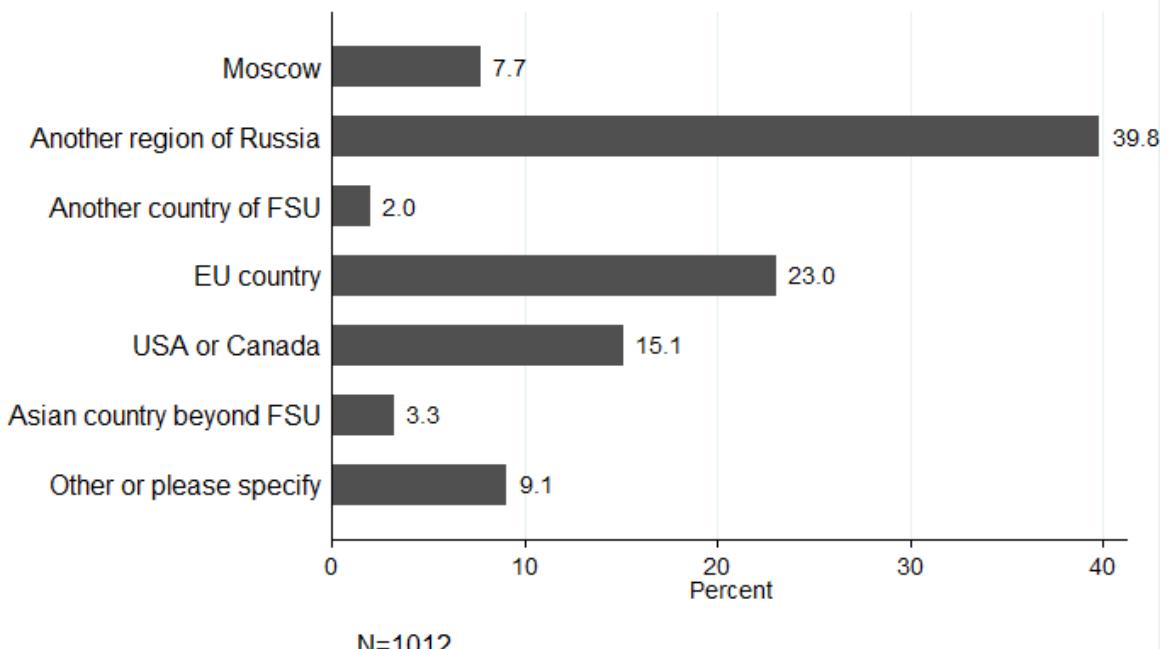


Figure 9

Are you thinking about leaving the place  
you are currently living in?

