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Are Sanctions on Russia Working?

The Views from the United States, Ukraine, and Russia

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August 2022

Public opinion plays an important role determining whether sanctions work. Officials in sanctioning countries want their publics to see the policy as effective. And a major goal of sanctions is to mobilize publics in target countries to push for policy change that would ultimately get sanctions lifted. In the case of the current Western sanctions on Russia, there are a variety of outcomes that might indicate success, ranging from the deterrence of expanded military action beyond Ukraine to catalyzing regime change within Russia. Recent surveys from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs in the United States, the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in Ukraine, and the Levada Center in Russia capture how the publics in these countries are evaluating the sanctions and whether they are seen as effective.

Key Findings

- Majorities of Americans expect the current sanctions imposed on Russia to be effective at weakening the Russian economy (70%), deterring Russia from attacking NATO members (58%), and weakening Russia's ability to engage in future military actions (58%).
- Four in 10 Americans believe the sanctions will be effective at forcing Russia to withdraw troops from Ukraine (40%).
- Only a third of Ukrainians think the sanctions on Russia will prompt the Kremlin to stop its aggression against Ukraine (32%).
- The Russian public reports being generally unconcerned about the Western sanctions, and a majority continue to say their life has not been seriously impacted by the policies.

Do the Sanctions Have Much Bite?

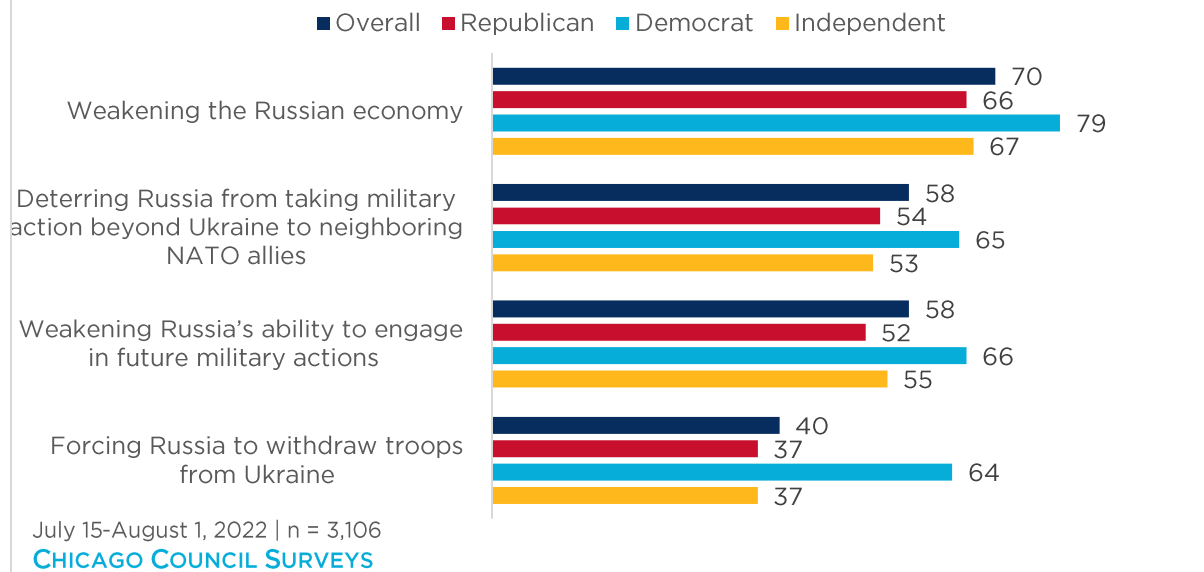
When Russia invaded Ukraine in February, the West responded immediately by imposing a broad and aggressive package of sanctions targeting the Kremlin. The sanctions have been commended by experts for the speed and unity Western nations displayed in imposing them and the wide range of institutions, officials, and industries they affect.

Previous surveys have shown that Americans support the sanctions against Russia. While they also feel they have been at least somewhat effective on a number of levels, they are slightly less convinced of the sanctions' efficacy than they were in March—likely a reflection of Russia staying in the fight and being able to stay afloat economically. Majorities continue to say the sanctions have been effective in weakening Russia's economy (70%, down from 77% in March) and its ability to engage in future military actions (58%, down from 65%), as well in deterring Moscow from taking military action beyond Ukraine to neighboring NATO allies (58%, on par with 60% last March). But fewer (40%, down from 47%) say they have been effective in forcing Russia to withdraw troops from Ukraine.

While majorities across party lines think the sanctions imposed on Russia will be effective at weakening the Russian economy and military and deterring an attack on a NATO member, confidence in these outcomes is significantly higher among Democrats. However, some of this difference may be due to partisan loyalties leading Democrats to be more supportive of the Biden administration sanctions regime than Republicans or Independents are inclined to be.

American Views of Sanctions' Efficacy

How effective do you think the sanctions imposed on Russia will be in achieving the following outcomes? (% net effective)

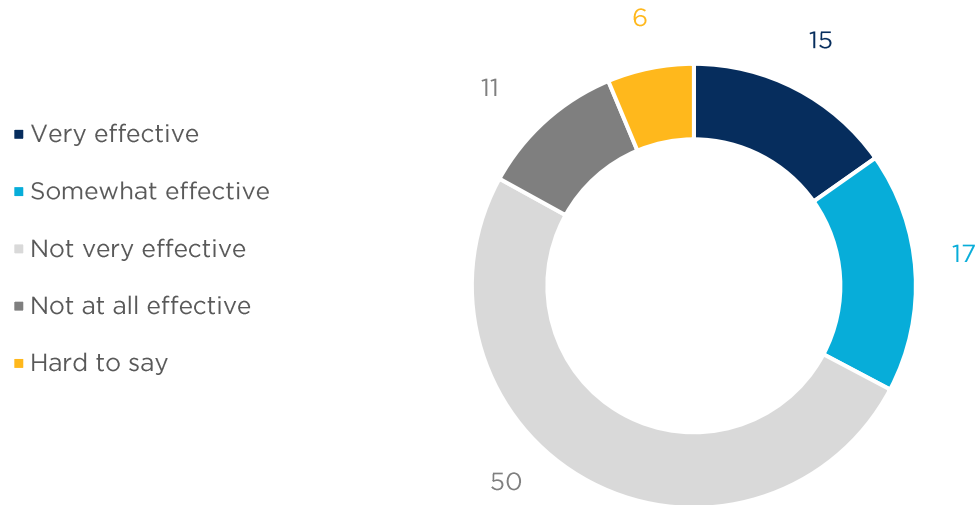


The View from Ukraine

According to a July poll conducted in Ukraine by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in areas of the country that are under Ukrainian control, Ukrainians are even less confident than Americans in the ability of sanctions to trigger a withdrawal of Russian troops from their country. Only a third of Ukrainians (32%) believe the current sanctions imposed on Russia will be at all effective in persuading Russia to stop its aggression against Ukraine (15% very effective, 17% somewhat effective). Russian-speaking Ukrainians (29%) and Russians living in Ukraine (19%) are somewhat less convinced about the efficacy of the sanctions than Ukrainians who speak either only Ukrainian (35%) or Ukrainian and Russian (34%).

Ukrainian Views of Sanctions' Efficacy

How effective do you think the sanctions imposed on Russia will be in order for Russia to stop aggression against Ukraine (%)



July 6-20, 2022 | n= 2,000

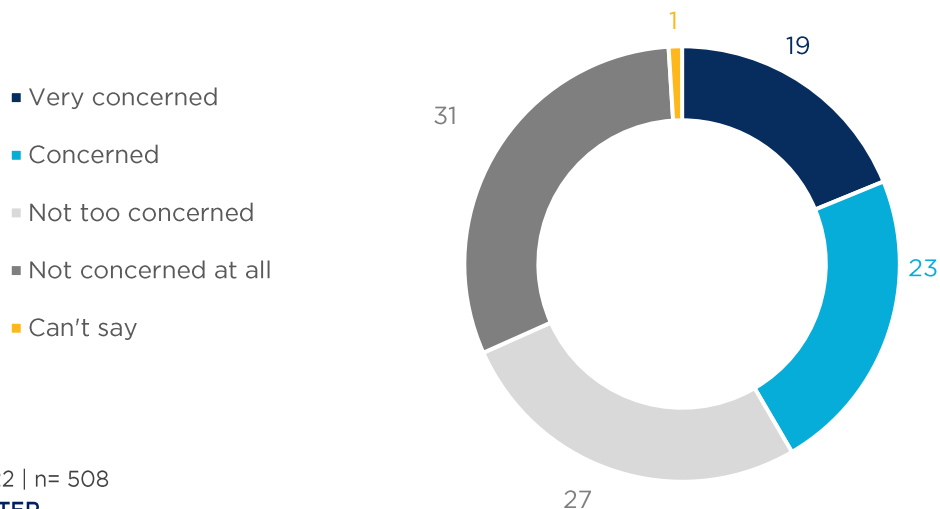
KYIV INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SOCIOLOGY

Are Russians Feeling the Pinch?

In their intended form, one way sanctions work is by creating costs for the public of the target country, who then pressure leaders to alter their behavior. [There is ample debate](#) about how long it takes for sanctions to effect change, but at present, a majority of the Russian public does not seem to be feeling the impact. A [June survey](#) of Muscovites by the Levada Center found that 58% of Russians living in Moscow are not concerned about the Western political and economic sanctions imposed on Russia (27% not too concerned, 31% not concerned at all). These findings are in line with a May Levada all-Russia survey, in which 61 percent of the Russian public reported being unconcerned by the sanctions regime (32% not too concerned, 29% not concerned at all).

Russian Concern about Sanctions

Are you concerned about Western political and economic sanctions imposed on Russia? (%)



June 11-20, 2022 | n= 508

LEVADA CENTER

In the [May survey](#), 83 percent of Russians also said the sanctions had not created serious problems for them or their families (50% no problems, 33% no serious problems). To some extent, this is to be expected, as the sanctions are primarily designed to target banks, businesses, and oligarchs rather than everyday Russians. However, the data do not indicate that sanctions-induced economic hardship among the Russian public will spur a change in President Vladimir Putin's Ukraine strategy any time soon. In fact, Levada also found that [three-quarters](#) of Russians believe Russia should continue on its current path despite the sanctions (75%).

Conclusion

Even though neither the American nor Ukrainian public thinks the current sanctions will persuade the Kremlin to stop its war in Ukraine, Americans are fairly optimistic that the Western sanctions will weaken Russia's economic and military capacity and deter further military action beyond Ukraine. This perceived efficacy likely means the Biden administration will be able to keep sanctions in place going forward, without worrying about facing public backlash or pressure at home. Plus, a key feature of sanctions is the way they take effect over time, as the impacts radiate throughout the country's economy. Just because Russians are divided today on their level of concern about sanctions, does not mean that sanctions will not be effective in the long run or that they should be deemed a failure and removed. Follow-up polling

will be necessary, particularly in Russia, to see if the impacts of sanctions intensify over time.

Methodology

The American data in this brief is from the 2022 Chicago Council Survey of the American public on foreign policy, a project of the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy. The 2022 Chicago Council Survey was conducted July 15–August 1, 2022, by Ipsos using its large-scale nationwide online research panel, KnowledgePanel, in both English and Spanish among a weighted national sample of 3,106 adults 18 or older living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is +/- 1.8 percentage points. The margin of error is higher for partisan subgroups or for partial-sample items.

Partisan identification is based on how respondents answered a standard partisan self-identification question: “Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?”

The 2022 Chicago Council Survey is made possible by the generous support of the Crown family and the Korea Foundation.

The Ukrainian data comes from a July 6–20 survey conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology using computer-assisted telephone interviews among a sample of 2,000 respondents living in all regions of Ukraine (except the Autonomous Republic (AR) of Crimea). The survey was conducted with adult (18 and older) citizens of Ukraine who, at the time of the survey, lived in the territory of Ukraine (within the boundaries controlled by the Ukrainian authorities until February 24, 2022). The sample did not include residents of territories that were not temporarily controlled by the authorities of Ukraine until February 24, 2022 (AR of Crimea, the city of Sevastopol, certain districts of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts), and the survey was not conducted with citizens who left the country after February 24, 2022. A full methodology statement can be found [here](#).

The Russian data comes from surveys conducted by the Levada Center. Methodology for the May survey can be found [here](#), and the June survey can be found [here](#).

About the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS)

KIIS is a private Ukrainian company that works in collaboration with the National University of “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.” KIIS was founded in 1990 as a research center of the Sociological Association of Ukraine and transformed

into private enterprise in 1992. We were a pioneer in the establishment of sociological research standards in Ukraine. Our innovations in Ukrainian sociological research are: the first manual for interviewers and interviewer training, in 1992; the first face-to-face interviews and focus groups, in 1992; the first national software for statistical data analysis, in 1990; and the first software for sample design, in 1993.

About the Chicago Council on Global Affairs

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs is an independent, nonpartisan membership organization that provides insight—and influences the public discourse—on critical global issues. We convene leading global voices, conduct independent research, and engage the public to explore ideas that will shape our global future. The Council is committed to bringing clarity and offering solutions to issues that transcend borders and transform how people, business, and governments engage the world. Learn more at thechicagocouncil.org and follow [@ChicagoCouncil](https://twitter.com/ChicagoCouncil).

About the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy

Established in 2018 with a transformative gift from the Crown Family, the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy is driven by the belief that the public plays a critical role in determining the direction of US foreign policy and that an informed and engaged public is critical for effective policymaking. The centerpiece of the Lester Crown Center is its annual survey of American public opinion and US foreign policy, the Chicago Council Survey, which has been conducted since 1974. For the latest research from the Crown Center, follow [@ChiCouncilFP](https://twitter.com/ChiCouncilFP).