

BELARUSIAN IDENTITY IN 2022: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY

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Belarusian identity is at a crossroads with socio-political conflict and contestation over values strongly influencing society's national projects.



Foreign policy preferences stem from attachment to a one of several national identity projects. Despite this Belarusians show a strong commitment to neutrality.



The nature of the Belarusian regime and its foreign policy orientation will deepen divisions within society. The ways Belarus overcomes these divisions will shape the country's future image.

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INTRODUCTION:

SOCIAL ISSUES AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

PROJECT CONCEPT

Events of recent years have changed Belarusian society, not least the country's socio-political life. The spring of 2020 saw the onset of a civil and political crisis which continues to this day. Among other things, the crisis raised questions about society's national and cultural development. Since mid-2020 Belarusians have been using contrasting/rivalrous symbols that refer to different interpretations of the country's past, national culture, and language, and which engender different attitudes to these aspects of the Belarusian nation. Similarly, Belarusians had no consensus regarding Russia's military invasion of Ukraine in 2022 — which further changed the domestic socio-political situation. The Belarusian regime's narrative has become explicitly pro-Russian.

An analysis of media discourse shows that the issues of national unity and, accordingly, of national symbols, language and history have become particularly relevant in recent months compared with the pre-war period. Security agencies have prosecuted tour guides for telling the "wrong" version of history, while the regime's leader, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, has held meetings with Aleksandr Dugin, an ideologist of Russian fascism.

The current situation in Belarus raises the question as to whether there is a unity of the Belarusian people as a group of individuals sharing common features that contribute to a collective self-consciousness and a common attitude to national culture and history — namely, is there a national consciousness?

National consciousness is a phenomenon of mass consciousness expressed in the sense of belonging to a certain nation and the feeling of apartness of this nation from others due to the unity of language, historical path, and possessing cultural and anthropological features that were shaped by historical and cultural processes on a certain territory.

Changes in the country and society raise the following questions:

- What defines the modern Belarusian national consciousness?
- What are its features?

- What components is it made of?
- What forms does it adopt in different social groups?
- How does national consciousness link to the ongoing socio-political confrontation in Belarusian society?
- What role do Belarusians' foreign policy preferences play in the national consciousness?

Equally important are social attitudes towards the national culture and its peculiarities, history, language, as well as symbols representing, or which may represent, the most important components of the national consciousness. This study was designed to answer these and other questions about the Belarusian national identity and its role in the events occurring in the country.

The researchers tried to examine the national consciousness of Belarusians through the prism of Belarusian society's values, its existing social contradictions, and its foreign policy orientations. Separate sections are devoted to each of these aspects.

The authors would like to thank the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung for its support and the opportunity to conduct the study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out by online survey (CAWI) from 12 August through 6 September 2022.

Sample size: 1,279 respondents.

Sample characteristics:

- Belarusians aged 18+
- The sample corresponds to the structure of general population of Belarusian urban dwellers by gender, age, size of settlement and level of education (see Appendix 5 for distributions)

The results of the first and second waves of the study may differ from previous reports since the new study refined the principle for weighting the sample. In 2020 and 2021, the 18–24-year-olds cohort was over-represented while the older population was under-represented. The structure is now brought as close as possible to the real composition of society.

The study analyses Belarusian society against three aspects:

1. National identity.
 - An evaluation scale was used to measure attitudes to national identity. The scale consisted of 26 statements covering all aspects, including language, history, culture, attitudes to symbols, and geopolitical orientation. Five segments of society have been identified based on responses.
2. Social and political conflict in society.
 - Social and political conflict is assessed by analysing respondents' trust in government structures and in structures which the authorities consider their opponents (e.g. independent media and human rights centres). Four segments of society have been identified based on responses.
3. Media consumption and "information bubbles".
 - Analysis of media consumption involved distinguishing the audiences of state and non-state media, as well as those who consume both sources of information and those who do not actively consume any media. Three segments of society have been identified based on responses.

as well as a substantial share of respondents who skipped the question about state symbols. During the previous survey wave, many respondents stopped completing the survey at the question on state symbols. It was therefore decided to give respondents the opportunity to skip a question by adding the skip button styled as an interface element. The "skip question" button was most popular among the representatives of the "centrist" and "neutral" segments.

To minimise the influence of the fear factor, the questionnaire included other devices: the respondent was assured about the anonymity of the survey at the beginning of the questionnaire, and the most sensitive questions were put at the end of the questionnaire. At the same time, the clustering tools used in the study are more resistant to fear-related distortions due to their multidimensional nature.

RISKS AND LIMITATIONS

Two kinds of limitations are typical in a study of this nature:

1. **Sampling bias.** Some sampling bias can occur from the use of an online survey method. The panel used for the survey risks under-representation of older and rural populations due to lower internet use. However, an online survey is the only feasible means of collecting information on complex societal issues in Belarus in the current situation. The average duration of an interview in the study was 38 minutes and the only alternative method of data collection that would allow such a duration — face-to-face interviewing — is unavailable in Belarus due to the risks involved in a repressive political environment.
2. **The fear factor.** In Belarus, research on political topics is extremely sensitive. According to Chatham House,¹ politically-neutral citizens are most susceptible to fear. People in this segment are more likely to shift the distribution of answers towards neutral options such as "none of the above" or "prefer not to say". On scale questions, they would choose "fuzzy" statements. In this regard, proportions of "prefer not to say" options may be inflated because of fears in taking the survey. Of note is a considerable number of "average answers" to the question about supporting a particular side in the geopolitical conflict

1 Chatham House. *Belarusians' views on the political crisis* (poll conducted 1-10 November 2021)

1

THE VALUES HELD BY BELARUSIAN SOCIETY: CURRENT SITUATION AND TRENDS

Among Belarusian citizens (urban residents), five main segments can be identified according to their attitudes towards national consciousness or identity:

- **The Conscious** — those advocating the maximum development of the Belarusian language and culture and sharing pro-European views;
- **The Soviet** — those harking back to the Soviet Union and displaying views and values of those times, but supporting the development of national consciousness;
- **The Emerging** — those remaining undecided about their position;
- **The Indifferent** — those paying little attention to nationality issues and not believing in its importance;
- **The Russified** — those rejecting the development of the Belarusian language and culture and comprising the most pro-Russian citizens in Belarus.

Attitudes towards nationality issues are shaped by the segments' preferred information space. While the Conscious use non-state media, the Soviet, the Indifferent and the Russified tend to obtain information mostly from state media, particularly TV, and are often influenced by pro-Russian propaganda, which is widely represented in such media.

In general, when analysing the national identity of Belarusian society against the events of 2020 and the Russia-Ukraine war, one can observe two trends:

- A distancing of the concept of being "a Belarusian" from material things (e.g. place of residence, place of birth, citizenship

status, or having origins in and living in one country) and privileging non-material ones (e.g. language, culture, values, or patriotism), occurring against the backdrop of significant emigration from Belarus in recent years.

- Belarusians' growing awareness of them being a separate nation. This is due to a gradual weakening of the triunity concept,* more frequent association with other residents of Belarus and less frequent association with Europeans, and among the Conscious less association with Lithuanians. It seems this separation occurs against the background of the Russia-Ukraine war and its consequences: sanctions, increased antagonism between Russia and Europe, a situation that is at odds with Russians.

1.1. SOCIAL GROUPS AND SEGMENTS OF BELARUSIAN SOCIETY IN THE CONTEXT OF NATIONAL AND CULTURAL CONTRADICTIONS

Belarusians are divided into five segments according to their attitudes to national: the Conscious, the Soviet, the Emerging, the Indifferent and the Russified.

Three of these segments feel affinity to existing Belarusian national projects: the national-romantic, Europe-oriented project (the Conscious); the Soviet-oriented project (the Soviet); and the modern Russian project (the Russified).

The Indifferent show signs of national indifference, that is, they are unconcerned about the national components of identity.

The Emerging segment is somewhere in between in so far as its representatives neither demonstrate clear inclination towards one of the three national projects nor display national indifference.

* Triunity refers to a Russian imperialist myth that Belarusian Russian and Ukrainian people share same ancestry, history, historical mission and are essentially part of one larger "Russian" family. This myth denies the idea of independence of both Ukrainians and Belarusians from Russians.

Figure 1.1.

Groups of factors (components) in relation to nationality issues

BELARUSIAN

- I wish we had more Belarusian language on TV and radio
- I would like more Belarusian language in our lives
- I think there should be more courses in Belarusian in our educational institutions
- I would switch to the Belarusian language if more people around me spoke Belarusian
- Many problems in our country are due to the fact that we have forgotten our culture and language
- I think that the Belarusian language is beautiful
- I would be willing to pay more taxes if these funds were spent on the development of the Belarusian national culture
- I think that strengthening of the Belarusian people's national identity is possible
- I am bitter and resentful, when the rights of the Belarusian-speaking population are infringed
- I will not be upset if the Belarusian language completely disappears from the life of Belarusians (negative correlation)

■ Maximum significance

RUSSIAN-SOVIET

- If I had to choose between emigrating to Russia or Western Europe, I would choose Russia
- We should not get rid of the Soviet legacy
- I am equally enthusiastic about the successes of Belarusians and Russians
- The breakup of the Soviet Union was a major tragedy
- It would be good if Belarus finally united with Russia
- Ukrainians are themselves to blame for what had happened in the Donbass
- There is no infringement of the Belarusian language
- I don't see any difference between Russians and Belarusians at all
- I don't like the Soviet names of the streets (negative correlation)
- I am afraid of Belarusian nationalism

■ High significance

NATIONALLY INDIFFERENT

- National culture and patriotism only create unnecessary barriers between people
- I don't think that national culture and language are important in the modern world
- Tolerance is more of a weakness than an advantage for Belarusians
- With a comparable standard of living, I'd rather live in Moscow than in Minsk
- I think, there are many problems in our country that are much more important than the national language and culture preservation
- Frankly speaking, I rarely think about the national culture, language and history issues

■ Medium significance

The main tool for measuring national identity in this study is a scale of 26 statements concerning language, history, culture, attitudes towards symbols, and geopolitical orientation.

Respondents were asked to rate these statements on a scale from 1 to 5, where "1" meant "totally agree", "3" meant "hard to say", and "5" meant "totally disagree".

Based on the collected answers, the researchers carried out a factor analysis (see Appendix 4) which highlighted three "components" in relation to the national (Figure 1.1):

- **Belarusian** — love for the Belarusian language and culture, support for their development and greater presence in the life of Belarusians;
- **Russian-Soviet** — nostalgia for the Soviet past and respect for it, orientation to Russia;
- **Nationally indifferent** — indifference to national components of identity. By using this name, the authors are referring to the corresponding concept in the academic literature², not implying any antagonism towards existing national projects or geographical localisation of such indifference. This component corresponds to Cosmopolitanism in previous survey waves; it was renamed so that it reflects only a lack of interest in the national without implying a commitment to a global identity.

Based on these three components, identified through sentiment towards the 26 statements in Figure 1.1, the researchers carried out a cluster analysis. It was used to determine the segments that differed in relation to the elements of national identity, such as values, culture, symbols and the like.

Based on the criterion of Belarusians' attitudes towards nationality issues, five main population segments were identified as of September 2022:

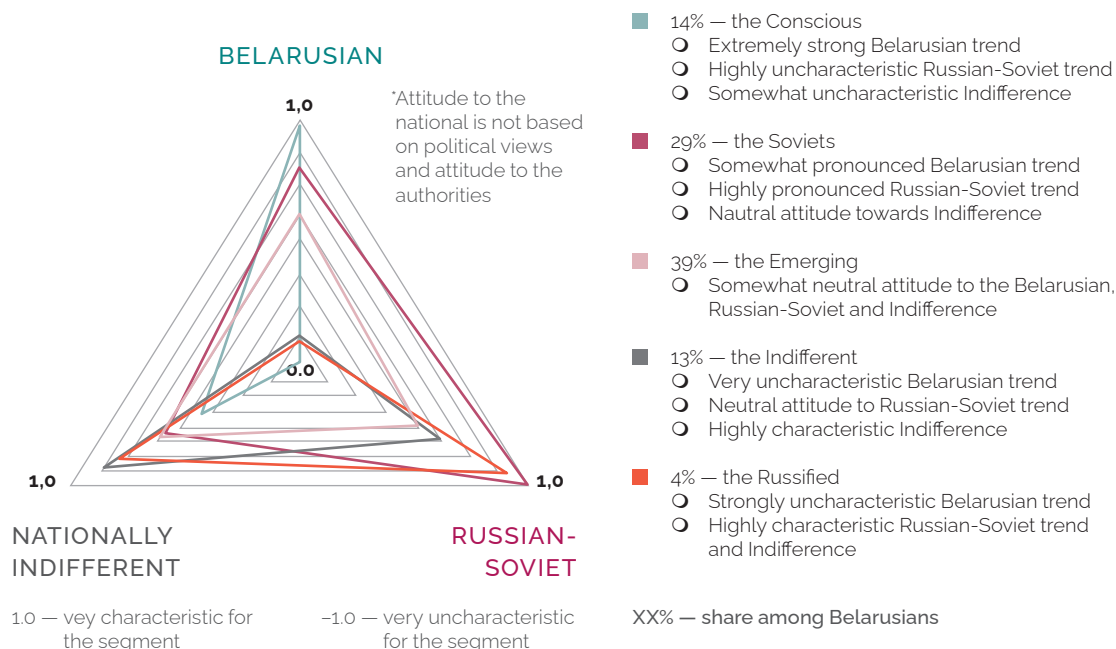
- **The Conscious** (14%) are associated with very strong attachment to the Belarusian component
 - These people support the maximum development and dissemination of the Belarusian language and culture; they are self-aware as Belarusians and mostly oriented towards Europe.
 - A typical representative of this group is a man with higher education and high income, living in Minsk. Professionals and entrepreneurs in hotel and restaurant businesses or IT are also prominent members of this segment.
 - The Conscious are the only ones who prefer non-state media (53%).
- **The Soviet** (29%) are associated with very pronounced attachment to the Russian-Soviet component, and some attachment to the Belarusian component.
 - These people miss the Soviet Union and, probably for this reason, they see no difference between Russians and Belarusians. In general, they hardly support the spreading of the Belarusian language,

² Miller, A. "National Indifference» as a Political Strategy?", Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History, 2019

- but still consider it beautiful and do not oppose its development. They also believe in strengthening of the national consciousness of the Belarusian people. Despite the Soviet influence, they may well have been affected by the "soft Belarusisation"³ of the past decade.
- Compared with other segments, those belonging to the Soviet segment are more likely to have secondary education; a typical representative of this group is a skilled worker living in the Gomel region.
 - Equal proportions of the segment prefer state media and both types of media (state and non-state).
- **The Emerging** (39%) have a neutral attitude to all three components.
- Representatives of this segment, more often than others, find it difficult to answer or otherwise give average answers to almost all questions; once they are done shaping their principles and positions, they are likely to be polarised within the segment.
 - Most of the Emerging come from the Brest region and work in the field of education or are skilled workers. In most cases, they are not married.
 - Most representatives of this segment actively consume both state and non-state media.
 - The Emerging is a new name for the Conformal from the previous survey waves. The old name reflected the segment's consistency with official pre-2020 rhetoric when the authorities flirted simultaneously with national identity and the Russian-Soviet project. Today, the authorities' narrative has shifted strongly towards the Russian-Soviet identity, which means that the segment's interest in Belarusianness runs counter to it. The name "Emerging" reflects the segment's transition: they are yet to join any of the national identity projects but lack the national indifference typical for the Indifferent.
- **The Indifferent** (13%) are marked by a very strong attachment to the nationally-indifferent component and have very little attachment to the Belarusian component.
- These people do not view national culture and language as something important in the modern world and are less likely to care about such issues compared with other segments; accordingly, they do not advocate the development of the Belarusian language and culture.
 - They are usually women from the Gomel or Mogilev regions. They are more likely to have secondary education; most of them are unskilled and service workers.
 - They prefer state media.
- **The Russified** (4%) have very little attachment to the Belarusian component, but strong attachment to the Russian-Soviet and nationally-indifferent components.
- This is a new segment absent in the previous waves. It was singled out from the Indifferent segment based on the following observations:
 - When analysing the answers to the 26 statements used in the factor analysis, with respect to language, history, culture, attitudes to symbols, and geopolitical orientation, the researchers noticed the Indifferent was the only segment which did not consider the Belarusian language beautiful (56%), categorically objected to its increased use on TV and radio (59%), rejected the idea of more teaching of Belarusian language at school (54%), and would not be upset if this language completely disappeared from Belarusians' lives (78%).
 - In response to the question "What nationality do you identify yourself with?" it turned out that 24% of the Indifferent called themselves "Russians", and that they were mostly responsible for "Belarusophobic" answers. Given such observations, it was decided to isolate these 24% into a separate segment, the Russified.
 - This finally explained significant differences in the segment's answers to the previously-mentioned questions related to language, attitude to the Soviet Union and Russia from the answers of both the remaining Indifferent and the people who call themselves "Russians" in other segments.
 - Perhaps these are Russians who moved to Belarus, or those who have lived in the country all their life but have considered themselves Russians since Soviet times, or whose parents are Russians. Age-wise, it is the oldest segment mostly consisting of men and mostly with secondary education. Usually these are unskilled workers often working in agriculture, but who still have high income. In many cases, they are widows/ widowers and live alone.
 - Most of them support unification of Russia and Belarus, see no difference between citizens of these countries, are particularly nostalgic for the USSR and do not advocate any strengthening of the national consciousness of the Belarusian people. They are afraid of nationalism (56%) and usually feel no bitterness or resentment when the rights of the Belarusian-speaking population are infringed (Figure 1.2).
 - The Russified are active consumers of state media.

³ Рудкоўскі Петр. Ад «хворага» да «здаравага» нацыяналізму, 2018, [link](#) / Petr Rudkouski, From "sick" to "healthy" nationalism, 2018

Figure 1.2
Attitude to the nationality issue, by segment



1.2. THE IMAGE OF A BELARUSIAN

Belarusians share a positive perception of their fellow countrymen, shown by a mostly positive association with the image of a Belarusian.

Since 2020 there has been an ongoing "detachment" from the narrative about belonging to the triune identity.

The role of "material" factors in identifying oneself with being Belarusian continues to reduce against the increasing role "imaginary" factors of identification. This may be connected with the fact that a growing number of Belarusians have left the country since 2020.

The "image of a Belarusian" in this study is defined through questions of identifying other people as Belarusians, factors connecting Belarusians with each other, and associations with other Belarusians. The researchers used a theoretical scheme for studying Belarusian identity in which it is seen as a unity of ethnic, civil, cultural, and territorial components⁴.

Over the past two years, the basic criteria for defining a Belarusian remained the same, but their significance has changed. Today the main criterion is self-identification as a Belarusian, while being raised in Belarusian culture has become secondary. The feeling of belonging to the

Belarusian nationality is therefore now considered the most important indicator, but knowledge of the Belarusian culture and attachment to it, love for the country are still necessary. In other words, one's belonging to the "Belarusian" community is based on "imaginary" characteristics and values rather than on more classical indicators of associating oneself with the nation (such as territory or identity documents).

The role of Belarusian citizenship and the presence of Belarusian parents have significantly decreased as criteria over the past two years, which is probably due to increased migration from the country and the growing Belarusian diaspora around the world (Figure 1.3)⁵.

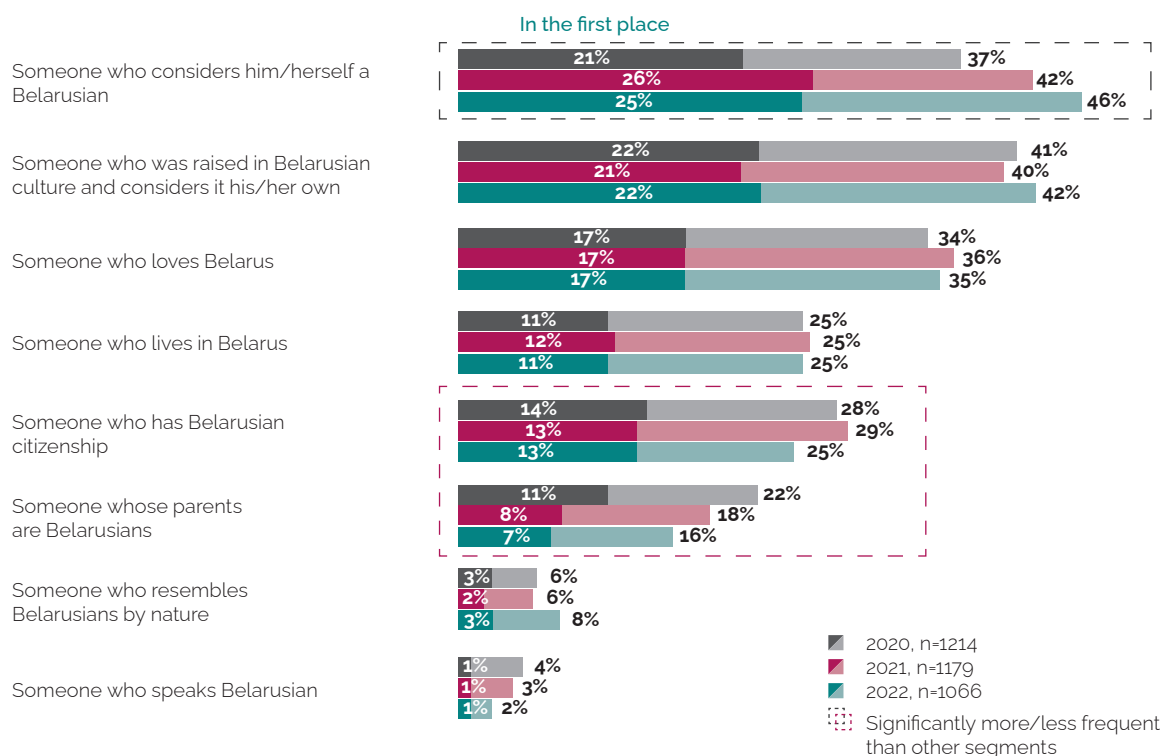
The role of these factors, as well as life in the country, are least appreciated by the **Conscious**. Their idea of a "Belarusian" correlates with the universally growing importance of one's self-identification as a Belarusian and the increasing significance of the "imaginary" factors of identity. The **Indifferent** hold the opposite opinion — for them, place of residence, origin and citizenship are more important, while nationality is something that is written on paper; they do not take into consideration the language and culture of the country in which they were born when forming their views and values. The **Soviets** stand out because love for the country is much more significant for them than it is for the other segments, highlighting their absolutely positive attitude towards the country and its culture, despite their nostalgia for the Soviet Union (Figure 1.4).

⁴ Науменко Л. И. Белорусская идентичность, 2012 L. Naumenko, *The Belarusian Identity*, 2021

⁵ «Почему белорусы уезжают за границу в 2022 году?», Belsat, 2022, <link>/ Why Belarusians are emigrating in 2022?, Belsat

Figure 1.3

Who can be considered a Belarusian, by survey wave (among respondents who identify themselves as "Belarusians")

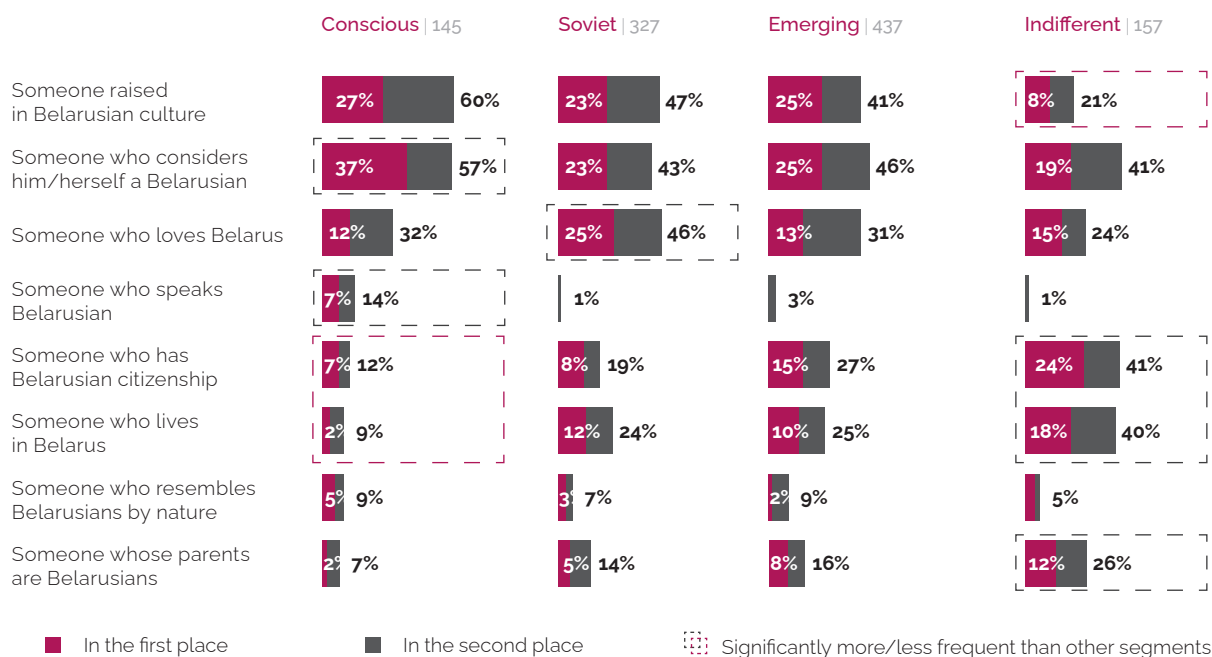


*Russified define themselves as "Russians"

Source: Answers to the questions "Who, in your opinion, can be considered a Belarusian in the first place?", "And in the second place?", "Which nationality do you identify yourself with?"

Figure 1.4

Who can be considered a Belarusian, by segment (among respondents who identify themselves as "Belarusians")

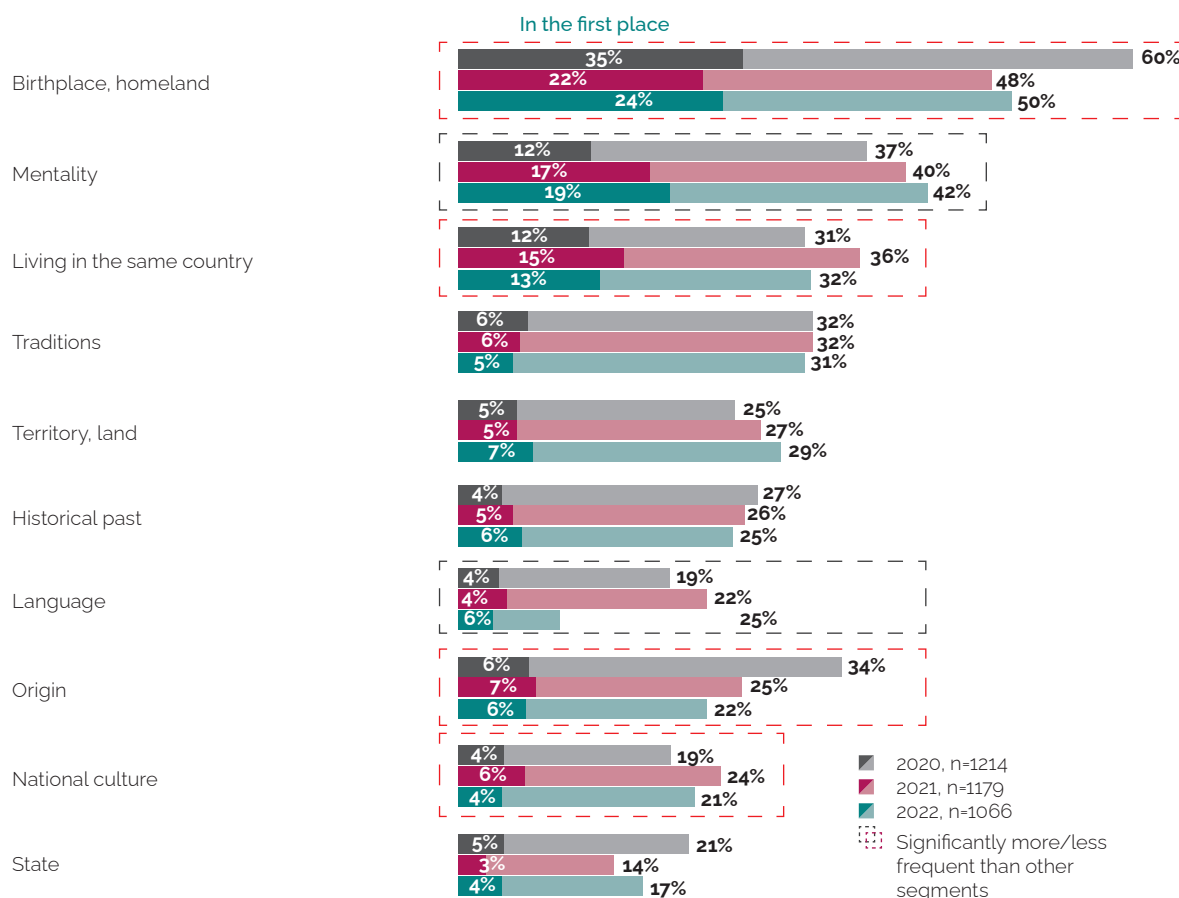


*Russified define themselves as "Russians"

Source: Answers to the questions "Who, in your opinion, can be considered a Belarusian in the first place?", "And in the second place?", "Which nationality do you identify yourself with?"

Figure 1.5

Top 10 characteristics connecting Belarusians, by wave (among respondents who identify themselves as "Belarusians")



Source: Answers to the questions "What unites (connects) you with the people of your nationality?", "And what else? Please choose no more than three options", "What nationality do you belong to?"

The declining role of citizenship and origin when identifying oneself with other Belarusians is accompanied by the decreasing significance of a birthplace, the fact of living in the same country, and origin as characteristics connecting Belarusians. As of 2022 the role of national culture is also decreasing, while the way of thinking, mentality, and language gain importance. The growing significance of the latter two confirms that the definition of a Belarusian and the connection between Belarusians are shifting to emphasise non-material factors (Figure 1.5)⁶.

Interestingly, the insignificant role of territory and living in the same country is typical in the **Soviet** segment, perhaps precisely because of the Soviet nostalgia and the ensuing mismatch between the territory and nationality (in the USSR movement and relocation between republics was common due to the absence of borders, allowing Belarusians to live in different Soviet republics)⁷. It is very

uncommon for the **Conscious** to believe that it is state that "links" Belarusians, probably because of the growing diaspora and distrust of state institutions, while the **Indifferent**, who do not care much about culture and traditions by definition, are less likely to consider them important in the identification and links between Belarusians (Figure 1.6). In addition to the characteristics included in the charts, it is worth adding that the role of national interests is the highest for the **Conscious and the Soviet** segments (19% and 24%, respectively), and the role of nature is highest for the **Indifferent** (31%).

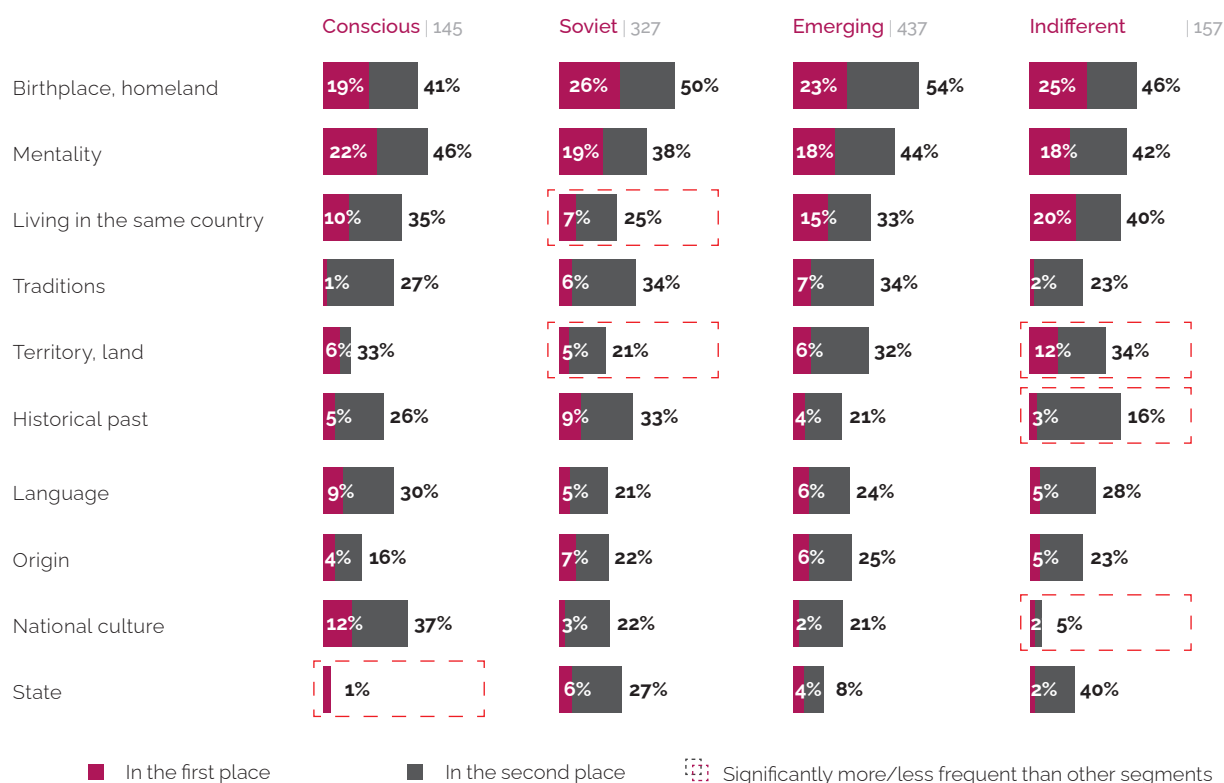
The events of 2020 have significantly affected perceptions about the origin of the Belarusians: the opinion that Belarusians are a separate nation has become much more popular, while the idea of triunity preserved from Soviet times is gradually losing adherents; that is, there is a gradual departure from the Soviet and pro-Russian views (Figure 1.7). At the moment, the departure is mainly due to the **Indifferent**: they have become increasingly sceptical about triunity and are likely to support the existence of a separate Belarusian nation.

⁶ Thinking, values, culture, language, and the like.

⁷ All-Soviet Union Census of 1989, <https://bit.ly/3FZ7QWb>

Figure 1.6

Top 10 characteristics connecting Belarusians, by segment (among respondents who identify themselves as "Belarusians")

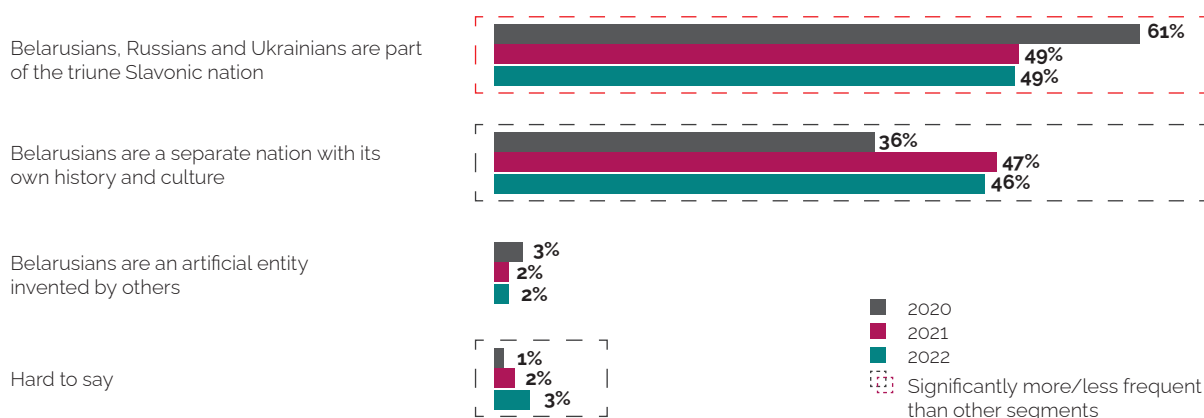


*Russified define themselves as "Russians"

Source: Answers to the questions "What unites (connects) you with the people of your nationality?", "And what else? Please choose no more than three options", "What nationality do you belong to?"

Figure 1.7

Perception of the Belarusians' origin, by survey wave

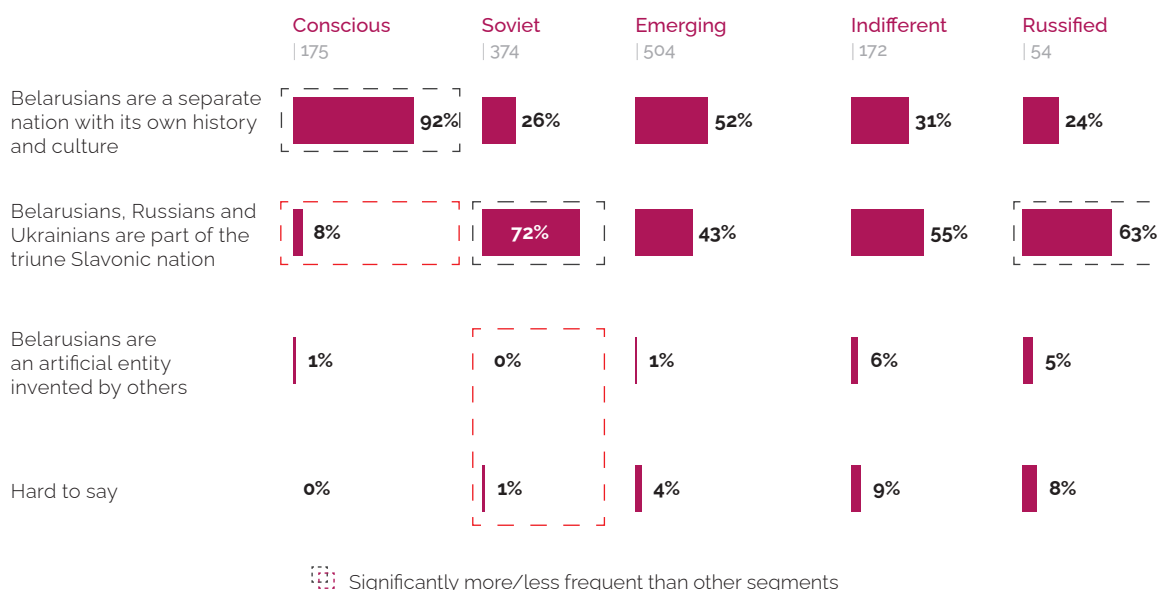


Source: Answers to the question "Which of the following statements would you most agree with?"

The **Conscious** absolutely believe in the independent history of Belarusians, unlike the **Soviet** and the **Russified** — segments most influenced by beliefs remaining from Soviet times and operating in Russia (Figure 1.8). Since the last survey wave, the idea of triunity has particularly rooted in the minds of the **Soviet**.

According to people living in Belarus, the portrait of a typical Belarusian is extremely positive. The most valued qualities include kindness, diligence, honesty, responsiveness, and calmness. At the same time, the main weaknesses are patience and cowardice. Belarusians are also quite often seen as patriots (Figure 1.9).

Figure 1.8
Perception of the Belarusians' origin, by segment



Source: Answers to the question "Which of the following statements would you most agree with?"

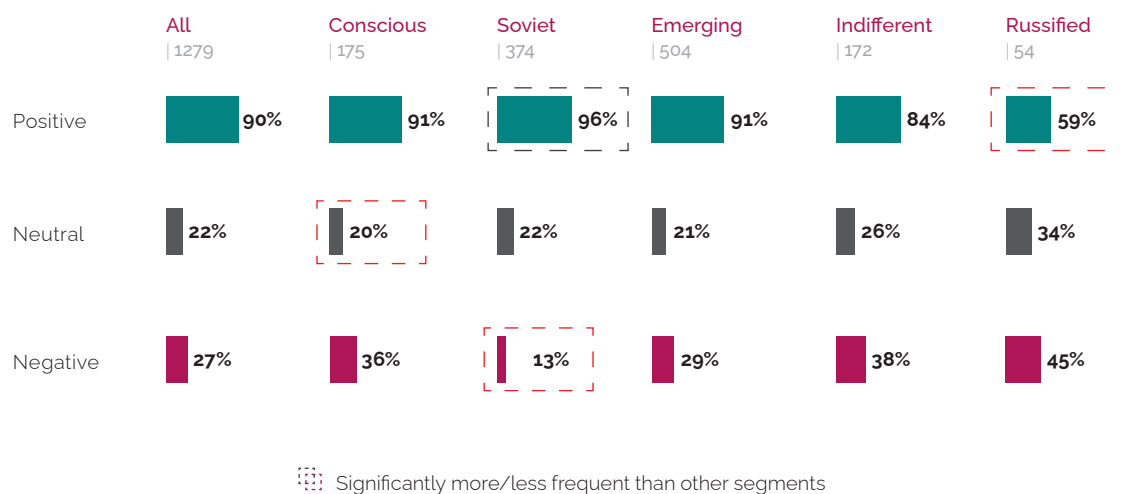
Figure 1.9
The image of a Belarusian – key characteristics



Source: Answers to the question "In your opinion, what is a typical Belarusian like? Try to describe him using three adjectives"

Figure 1.10

Mentioning the characteristics of the Belarusian's image, on average and by segment



Source: Answers to the question "In your opinion, what is a typical Belarusian like? Try to describe him using three adjectives"

As compared to 2021, Belarusians are increasingly viewed as peace-loving and industrious, as well as conservative, and less often — weak, but also strong and independent. Such differences probably emerge due to the gradual stabilisation of the situation in the country after events in 2020, but at the same time against the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine war in which Belarus is also involved.

The most positive attitude towards fellow Belarusians is observed in the **Soviet** segment whose members consider love for the country very important and obviously love Belarusians too, while the most negative attitude is demonstrated by the **Russified** (Figure 1.10).

Since 2021, in addition to supporting the above characteristics, those in the **Soviet segment** have increasingly associated Belarusians with progressiveness, kindness, and responsiveness. For them, Belarusians also became less cowardly. Similarly, compared to the previous wave, the **Conscious** were less likely to perceive Belarusians as mediocre and dull. This indicates an improvement of the nation's image in the eyes of both segments.

The lesser love for Belarusians demonstrated by the **Russified** is manifested in their considerably less frequent perception of Belarusians as kind, open and progressive; instead, they are much more likely to see them as weak and criticise them for vices (for example cunning, malice and greed) (Figures 1.11–1.12).

On the other hand, the **Indifferent** are much less likely to consider Belarusians hardworking and often describe them as weak, which probably influences their non-acceptance of nationality as something important in human life. They dislike the image of a Belarusian that has been formed (Figures 1.11–1.12).

Nonetheless, compared to the previous survey wave, more of them have come to think that Belarusians are open and kind. Moreover, they are less likely to criticise and point out their dullness, which suggests that the image of the nation in this segment's eyes may improve in the future.

Since the **Russified** consider themselves Russians, they are more likely to associate Belarusians with kinship and neighbourliness. They also tend to associate Belarusians with mediocrity and dullness. This is probably because they think life in Belarus, and their perception of all Belarusians, is that they are "the same, similar to themselves". It may also be because they treat Belarusians as Russians' younger brothers who are very similar, yet poorer, weaker and less influential (Figure 1.13).

1.3. SELF-IMAGE

The **Conscious** and the **Soviet** have fundamentally different self-images, with the only similarity being their self-identification as Belarusians or patriots. For example, the "European" or "Lithuanian" for the Conscious plays an important role in the identity structure, whereas both these identities are insignificant for the Soviet. Instead, the representatives of this segment often refer to themselves as the Soviet people.

Apparently, the "Slav" identity in the perception of a large number of the Conscious is associated with the Russian (or Soviet) national narrative.

The Conscious also have significantly fewer "local" identity levels as compared to other Belarusians.

Figure 1.11

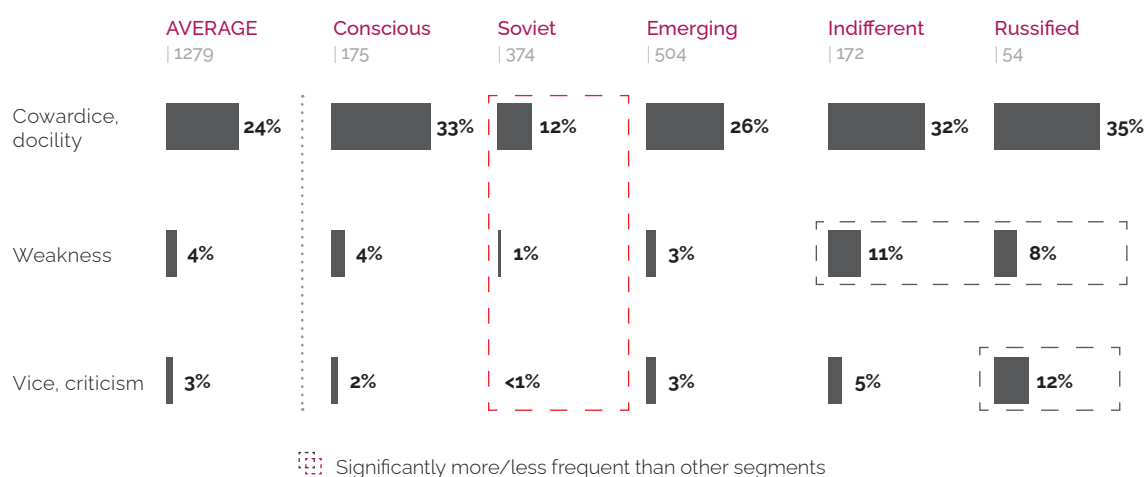
Positive characteristics of the Belarusian's image, on average and by segment



Source: Answers to the question "In your opinion, what is a typical Belarusian like? Try to describe him using three adjectives"

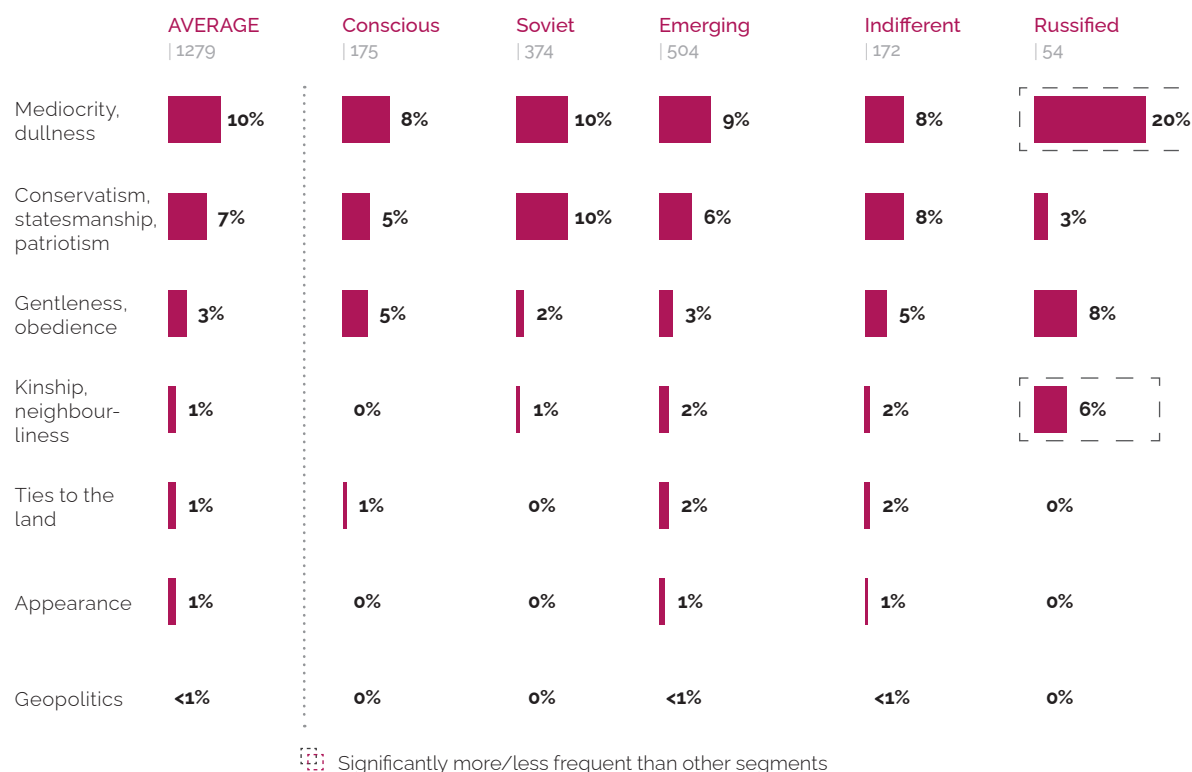
Figure 1.12

Negative characteristics of the Belarusian's image, on average and by segment



Source: Answers to the question "In your opinion, what is a typical Belarusian like? Try to describe him using three adjectives"

Figure 1.13
Neutral characteristics of the Belarusian's image, on average and by segment



Source: Answers to the question "In your opinion, what is a typical Belarusian like? Try to describe him using three adjectives"

The Belarusians' image of "self" presented in this section is based on answers concerning people's identification with various concepts ("Who do you perceive yourself in the first place?"; "Who do you feel yourself to be in the first place? And in the second?")⁸.

In 2022 people who identify themselves as "Belarusians" began to consider themselves less as Europeans but more often as locals, Slavs and citizens of the world (Figure 1.14).

The greater relevance of the concepts "local" and "citizen of the world" occurred mainly thanks to the **Indifferent** — the segment which has no attachment to the country, for whom self-identification is determined by geography. Also responsible for this result are the **Emerging** since they have not yet determined their position in relation to nationality issues.

Meanwhile, Belarusians' limited perception of themselves as Europeans is also due to the **Conscious**, who view themselves less as Slavs, Soviet people, locals or citizens of the Republic of Belarus, but often associate themselves with Europe and Lithuanians, which confirms their pro-European views and values. The reduction was also due

to the **Soviet** — a segment opposed to the **Conscious** in almost all its views and values, which in turn proves their Soviet and pro-Russian views. Moreover, this segment is made of mostly religious people (Figure 1.15).

In the case of the **Soviet**, their separation from some concepts was probably due to the aggravated antagonism between Russia and Europe caused by the Russia-Ukraine war. As for the **Conscious**, however, this reduction in self-association was most likely due to the fact that a lot of time has passed since the events of 2020. Before the 2020 election, one could observe a more active identification with Europeans — in connection with the pre-election events and protests against integration with Russia. This excitement has now diminished owing to elapsed time and the war, and shares of self-identification with Europeans have returned to pre-2020 levels. This could also explain the estrangement of the **Conscious** from the notions of "Lithuanian" and "Belarusian patriot".

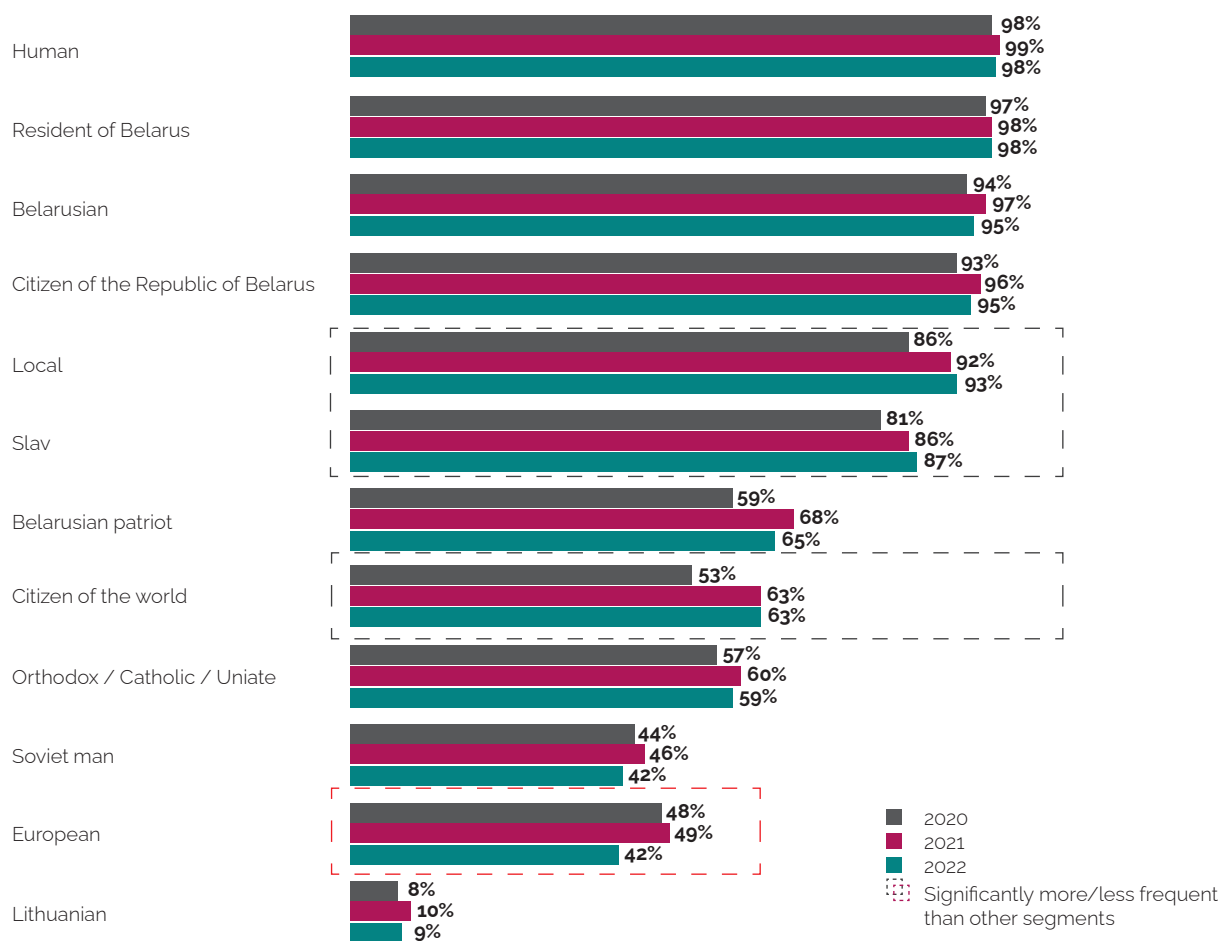
The decreasing share of Belarusians who associate themselves with Europeans was also affected by the position of the **Emerging** — most likely caused by the aggravation of antagonism, as is the case with the **Soviet** segment, and also the EU sanctions⁹.

⁸ Сацыялагічнае даследаванне «Нацыянальная ідэнтычнасць вачамі беларусаў: хто мы і якімі мы будзем?», Будзьма беларусамі, 2009, [<link>](#) / Sociological research "National identity through the eyes of Belarusians: who are we and what will we be?" Education by Belarusians, 2009

⁹ Sanctions against Belarus, Deutsche Welle, [<link>](#)

Figure 1.14.

Self-identification of Belarusians, by survey wave (among respondents who identify themselves as Belarusians)



Source: Answers to the questions "Who do you perceive yourself in the first place?" (answer the question WHO AM I? using the statements below), "What nationality do you identify yourself with?"

Figure 1.15.

Self-identification of Belarusians, in general and by segment (among respondents who identify themselves as Belarusians)

	Human	Resident of Belarus	Belarusian	Citizen of the Republic of Belarus	Local	Slav	Belarusian patriot	Citizen of the world	Orthodox / Catholic / Uniate	Soviet man	European	Lithuanian
AVERAGE 1066	98%	98%	95%	95%	93%	87%	65%	63%	59%	42%	42%	9%
Conscious 145	99%	99%	99%	89%	88%	72%	71%	59%	39%	5%	69%	34%
Soviet 327	99%	99%	99%	96%	94%	93%	79%	60%	71%	72%	32%	2%
Emerging 437	99%	98%	95%	95%	92%	87%	62%	65%	60%	33%	44%	9%
Indifferent 157	97%	95%	87%	95%	96%	85%	40%	69%	50%	42%	33%	3%

1 The sum of the shares of answers "I perceive myself fully as" and "I perceive myself as"

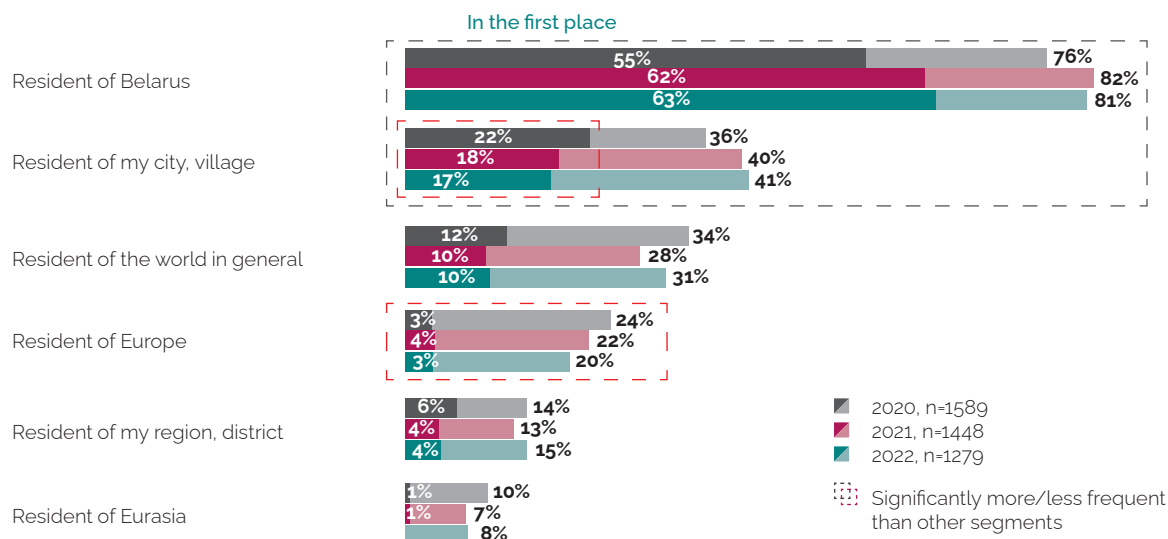
2 Russified define themselves as "Russians"

Dashed boxes indicate segments significantly more or less frequent than other segments

Source: Answers to the questions "Who do you perceive yourself in the first place?" (answer the question WHO AM I? using the statements below), "What nationality do you identify yourself with?"

Figure 1.16.

Geographical self-identification of Belarus residents, by survey wave



Source: Answers to the questions "Who do you perceive yourself in the first place? And in the second place?"

With their opposing views, the **Conscious** and the **Soviet** agree on only the most popular identifications (human, resident of Belarus, Belarusian) and patriotism (they agree in their love for the country).

At the same time, "patriotism" for them is about different things and concepts:

- For the **Conscious**, patriotism is predominantly linked to non-material aspects of nationality, such as language and culture, and not tied to geography. In addition, they correlate patriotism with orientation towards Europe and, disagreeing with the current government's actions, they see it as their duty to change state policy (despite their reducing number this year, most likely due to military actions, patriots still make up almost three quarters of the segment).
- The **Soviet**, on the other hand, associate patriotism with their Soviet and, to some extent, pro-Russian values. Despite their belief in the development of "the national", they generally support the current state policy and the orientation towards Russia — a big, strong state in their eyes, and they see Russians as their brothers from the Soviet era.

Over the past two years, the residents of Belarus began to associate themselves more frequently with the country as a whole and with their city, and less frequently with Europe, which is probably due to the crises of 2020 and 2022 which together highlighted the difference between Belarus and Europe (particularly the European Union) in values, laws, attitudes, and reinforced Belarusians' attachment to the country (possibly both positively — their identification with culture, language and values, and negatively — complicity in the attack on Ukraine and international sanctions) (Figure 1.16).

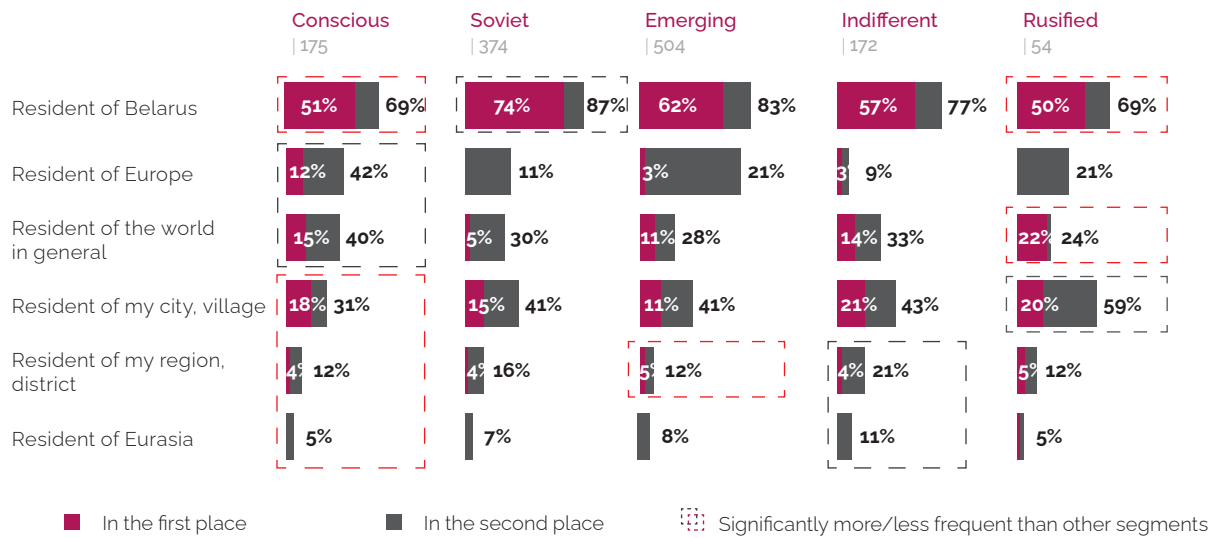
Self-identification of the **Indifferent** with geography is confirmed by their tendency to relate themselves to narrow concepts (a region, a district) or to overly-broad concepts (Eurasia). This means that, unlike other segments, they are less likely to feel their belonging to a country or a part of the world that is associated with certain cultural, linguistic and value attitudes. The **Russified** (probably because they identify themselves as Russians) and the **Conscious** (for whom patriotism and the notion of a Belarusian are not linked to geography) less often consider themselves residents of Belarus. The **Soviet** call themselves residents of Belarus more often than others (Figure 1.17).

1.4. THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN IDENTITY

The importance of the Belarusian language is determined by its inclusion in a particular national project. At the same time, the "importance" of the language mostly consists in its identification with this national project since the overwhelming majority of Belarusians do not use the Belarusian language in everyday life.

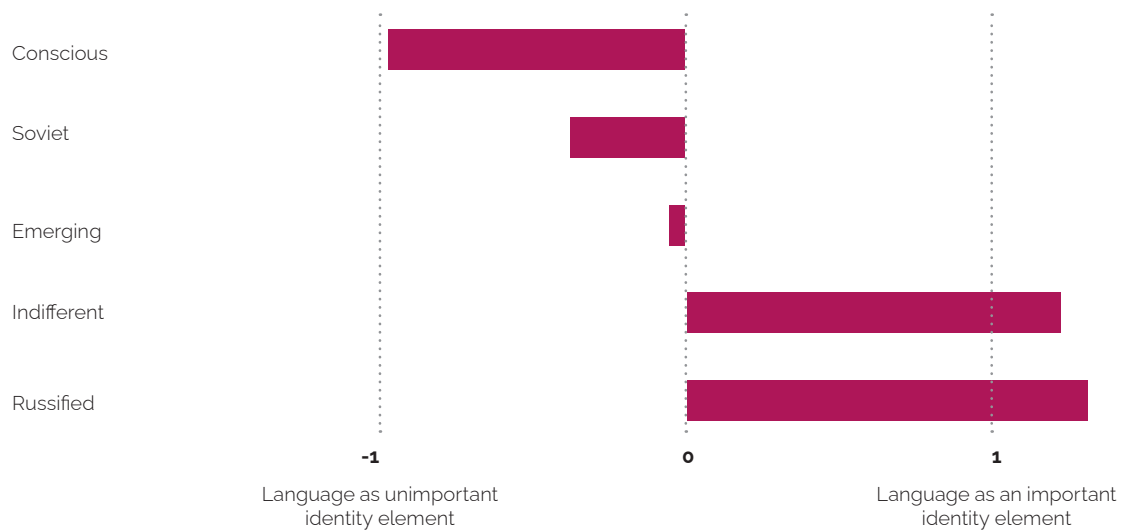
Language has two main functions: communication and identification. In many countries, these functions are of equal importance, but the communication function hardly applies in the case in Belarus where 96% of residents speak Russian in their everyday lives. Moreover, only 4% of Belarusians consider the Belarusian language important for defining a person as a "Belarusian" and only 25% believe that Belarusians are connected by the language.

Figure 1.17.
Geographical self-identification of Belarus residents, by segment



Source: Answers to the questions "Who do you perceive yourself in the first place? And in the second place?"

Figure 1.18
Importance of the Belarusian language as an identity element, by segment



Source: Factor analysis results

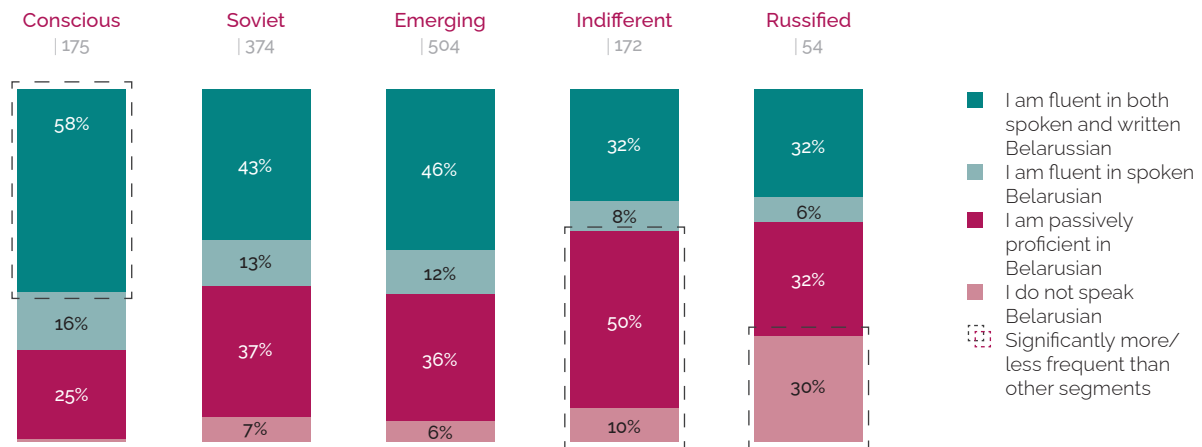
In view of this, the role of language is reduced to its identification function: thus, language is an important part of identity for the Conscious. Among them, a significantly larger share declare that they use Belarusian in their everyday lives (10%) than in any other segment.

In the Russian national project, Belarusian is not important, and in the Soviet one, it is secondary to Russian, so language does not play an important role in identity for these segments. At the same time, on this particular criterion, the Emerging segment occupies a median position because its representatives are influenced by several national pro-

jects (Figure 1.18). See Appendix 4 for more details on the factor analysis procedure.

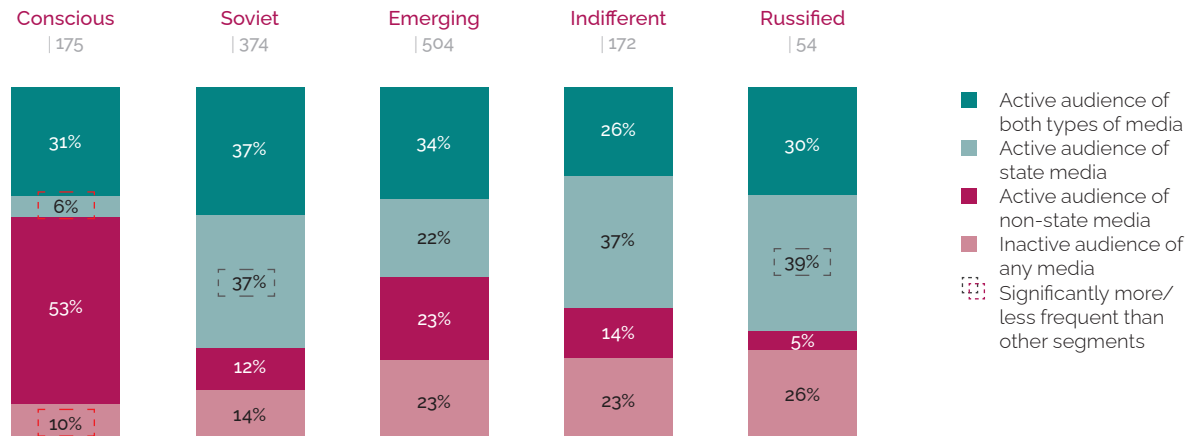
The **Conscious**, who are much concerned with the development of Belarusian culture and language, inevitably know the language better, while over 40% of the **Soviet** and the **Emerging**, and over 30% of the Indifferent and the **Russified**, consider themselves fluent in the language (Figure 1.21). This is particularly surprising in the case of the **Russified** who always use Russian in their everyday lives. However, it is likely that the segments simply overestimate themselves because, among those who are "fluent in both

Figure 1.19.
Knowledge of the Belarusian language, by segment



Source: Answers to the question "Please rate your level of Belarusian language skills on a scale"

Figure 1.20
Media consumption by segment



spoken and written language", more than 60% use either the local dialect or Russian words mixed with Belarusian ones (among the **Russified**, there are 64% of them, and these are those who, in their opinion, are fluent in both spoken and written language), or just insert separate Belarusian words or phrases into Russian speech.

TV as the main source of information by these segments suggests that they are immersed in the Russian-Belarusian state information bubble and its broadcasting narratives about the greatness of the Soviet Union, the importance of integration between Belarus and Russia, the brotherly nations, and the threat from the West and the United States.

1.5. THE ROLE OF STATE PROPAGANDA IN IDENTITY FORMATION

The correlation between attitudes towards nationality issues and by consumption of state or non-state sources of information indicates that media messages influence the predominance of pro-Russian or anti-Belarusian positions among the Soviet, the Indifferent and the Russified. Significant use of

Attitudes to nationality issues are indirectly influenced by staying in a particular media space. The segments show fundamental differences in terms of the media content consumed daily. The **Conscious** is the only permanent audience of non-state media (see Appendix 3 for the methodology). At the same time, the **Soviet**, the **Indifferent** and the **Russified** are mostly identical in their preferences by actively consuming state media. The only difference is that the Soviet constitutes a larger active audience.

Table 1.1.
TOP 5 most frequently consumed communication channels by segment

CONSCIOUS	SOVIET	EMERGING	INDIFFERENT	RUSSIFIED
Zerkalo (zerkalo.io)	NTV-Belarus	NTV-Belarus	NTV-Belarus	NTV-Belarus
Onliner	Yandex Zen, etc.	Yandex Zen, etc.	ONT	Yandex Zen, etc.
NEXTA (incl. NEXTALive)	ONT	ONT	Yandex Zen, etc.	RTR-Belarus
Yandex Zen, etc.	Belarus 1	Onliner	STV	ONT
Belsat	RTR-Belarus	Belarus 1	Belarus 1	RTR-Planeta

Figure 1.21.
Frequency of news viewing on TV, by segment

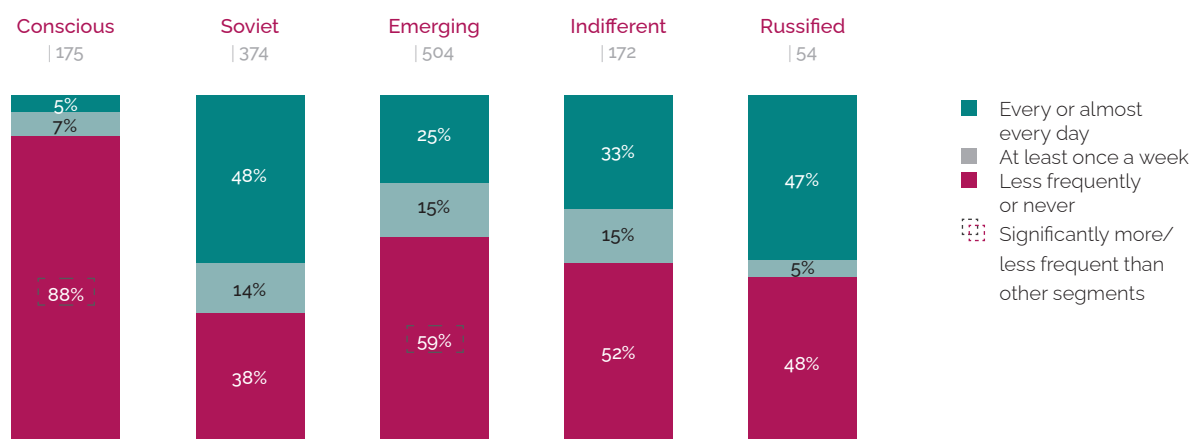
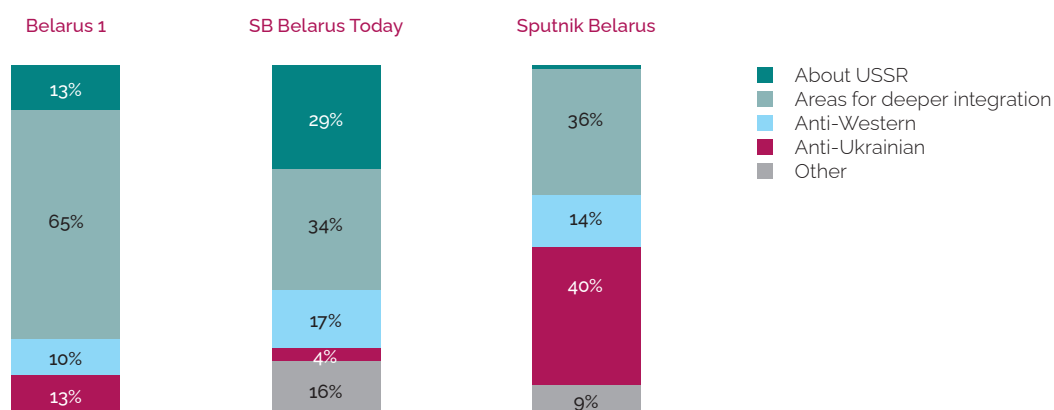


Figure 1.22.
Structure of the main messages of Russian state propaganda, 2019



It can be argued that the formation of a pro-Russian or even anti-Belarusian self-consciousness is affected, among other things, by permanent immersion in the official Belarusian and Russian media space. The **Soviet**, the **Indifferent** and the **Russified** have similar patterns in choosing information channels and their top preferences include NTV, ONT, Yandex (e.g. "Zen") and RTR.

TV is consequently the main source of information for the above segments.

At the same time, 2019 media monitoring by the Belarusian Association of Journalists¹⁰ confirmed that TV was the well-spring of pro-Russian propaganda in Belarus. Four out of the nine channels included by the government in the mandatory public TV package were based on Russian TV productions and showed more than 60% Russian-made TV programming during prime-time broadcasting.

Although the monitoring dates to 2019, there is every reason to believe that the amount of Russian propaganda on TV has not decreased.

The Belarusian audience systematically and regularly receives a predominantly Russian media agenda and a pro-Kremlin view of major events in the world, including from state-funded media outlets. The relevant ideological and cultural orientations are therefore "programmed" not only at the conceptual level of direct messages, but also through media rhetoric, as well as through the formation of the typical citizen's emotional and subconscious dependence on Russian content.

10 Продвижение «русского мира» идет через белорусские ТВ-каналы, Беларуская асацыяцыя журналістаў, 2019 г. / *"Russian world" advances through Belarusian TV channels, the Belarusian Association of Journalists, 2019*

2

SOCIAL CONTRADICTIONS IN BELARUSIAN SOCIETY

Over the past year there has been a significant shift towards public satisfaction with the general direction of Belarus's development. Nevertheless, there are two opposing segments in society that differ according to their degree of trust in state and independent structures:

- **Ardent opponents** are extremely distrustful of all state structures and have high trust in independent ones;
- **Ardent supporters** are extremely trustful of state structures and distrust non-state institutions.

The nuclei of these groups are formed by representatives of different Belarusian national projects, the Conscious and the Soviet respectively, and thus they serve as a basis for social conflict inside the country.

They take strictly opposite positions regarding the direction of the Belarusian state's development and express exceptionally strong animosity towards each other, using different sources of information. Members of these groups consider the "other, alternative side" to be dangerous for themselves and for society.

The study revealed five value dimensions in Belarusian societal thinking: state paternalism, tolerance of state violence, democratic values, belief in the supernatural, and intolerance of violence. The five segments identified according to their attitudes towards nationality issues, as described in the previous section, were found to have starkly different views on these five societal dimensions. In other words, the political conflict is closely linked to the national views of different population groups. For example, a link was found between adherence to the Soviet national project and both supernatural beliefs and archaic attitudes. The only segment that lacks such attitudes is the Conscious. This observation raises an interesting question: what accounts for the inverse relationship between adherence to the romantic project and supernatural beliefs?

The study also asked respondents which issues they considered the most urgent for Belarus and national development.

In general, economic issues remained the most urgent concerns of society, but the Russia-Ukraine war and the EU and US sanctions were among the top five issues, with the topic of war being relevant to all segments. For the **Conscious**, however, the acuteness of this issue is significantly lower since they prioritised domestic problems. At the same time, the assessment of the importance of domestic political problems is generally decreasing.

This may be linked to a decreasing trust in the non-state media, including among the **Conscious** audience.

2.1. SOCIETY GROUPS BY TRUST IN DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONS

The basis for the social conflict is formed by two groups in society that differ significantly in their trust in state and non-state structures. **Ardent opponents** mainly trust opposition groups and institutions, while the **ardent supporters** constitute the core support based for the current authorities in the country. These groups are immersed in their respective information bubbles and probably avoid contact with each other where possible.

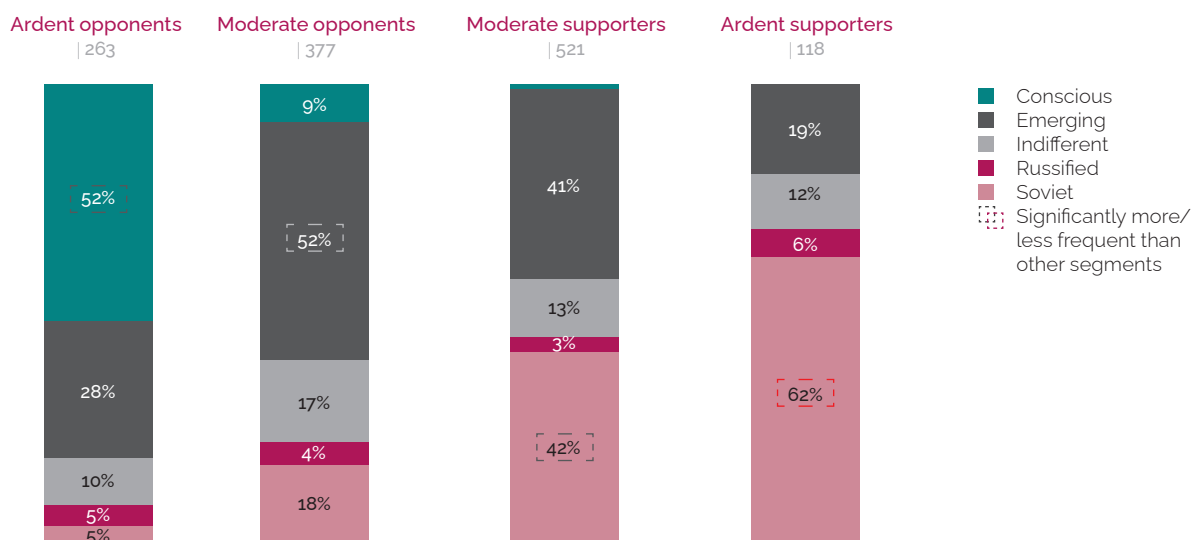
In addition, there exist two "centrist" groups – moderate opponents and moderate supporters. These are the most fluid parts of society in terms of their opinions and assessments that are largely made of the Emerging (in their attitude to nationality issues), which explains for their "moderate" trust in the various structures.

During data collection, respondents were asked to rate how much they trusted or distrusted, for example, "the police" or "people labelled political prisoners".

Table 2.1.
Institutions or groups included in the survey

"State" institutions or groups	"Non-state" institutions or groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Armed Forces ○ Police ○ Investigative Committee ○ Prosecutor's Office ○ State Security Committee ○ State media ○ Government ○ Officials ○ People who trust the authorities ○ Supporters of the current government ○ People who recognise the results of the 2020 presidential election 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Non-state media ○ Citizens of Belarus who emigrated in fear of persecution at home ○ Participants in protests in the summer and autumn of 2020 ○ People who do not trust the authorities ○ People who reject the results of the 2020 presidential election ○ People labelled political prisoners

Figure 2.1.
Interrelation of segments by trust and by their standing on nationality issues



A Social Conflict Segmentation (SCS) was carried out based on a series of questions relating to trust in different social institutions or groups, their threat to respondents personally and to society as a whole.

Belarusian society has been divided into four groups by their degree of their trust or distrust in the authorities, which also correlates with certain segments by national components (Figure 2.1.). Two of these segments represent opposite groups, which mainly form the basis of the ongoing social conflict:

- **Ardent opponents** (21%), who are extremely distrustful of state institutions/groups and have very high confidence in independent and opposition institutions.

- Half of this group consists of the members of **Conscious** segment, so it generally retains their basic features in relation to nationality issues.
- Representatives of this segment are typically men, residents of Minsk, likely to consider Belarusian as their native language (and less likely Russian), have higher education and high income, and tend to associate themselves with Polish nationality and language (up to 5%).
- More often, this is the **audience of non-state media** (44%).
- **Ardent supporters** (9%),¹¹ who typically have a high degree of trust in state institutions/groups and an

¹¹ Due to rounding, the total may not be equal to 100%.

extremely high degree of distrust in independent and oppositional institutions.

- This is the most "Soviet segment" in so far as more than half of its representatives also belong to the Soviet group on nationality issues.
- They are more likely to have secondary education and consider Russian as their native language.
- More than half of this group are in the **active audience of state media** (47%).

In addition, there are two "centrist" segments gravitating towards either position, but unlike the segments with clearly-opposed views, these two segments differ in their trust of specific institutions or groups:

- **Moderate opponents** (30%):
 - Half of this group are from the **Emerging** segment.
 - They lack any distinctive socio-demographic features. Compared to **ardent opponents**, they are more likely to consider Russian their native language, but they also consider Belarusian as their native language more often than either supporter segment.
 - They are in the **active audience of non-state media** (27%) more often than supporters, but this segment also has greater shares of the **inactive audience of any media** (22%) and **active audience of state media** (22%) than found among **ardent opponents**. In general, media consumption in this segment is distributed fairly evenly.
- **Moderate supporters** (41%):
 - This group is largely made of representatives of the **Emerging** and the **Soviet** segments.
 - Most of them live in the Mogilev and Gomel oblasts, regions adjacent to Russia. Similar to **more like opponents**, they tend to live in small and medium-sized cities (20–100,000).
 - In most cases, this segment represents **an active audience** of both **state and non-state media**.

2.2. BELARUSIAN SOCIETY'S SYSTEM OF VALUES

There is a shift towards state paternalism, with society as a whole highly unprepared for state violence, likely connected to people having not forgotten the trauma of 2020. Nevertheless, most Belarusians adhere to democratic values and are in favour of controlling the incomes of officials and preserving human dignity.

The analysis helped to identify five independent value dimensions that differentiate groups within Belarusian society. The differences between the groups are manifested in people's assessments of social, civil, economic, and similar phenomena. In Belarusian society, the importance

of specific values varies depending on which segment a person belongs to according to their attitudes towards nationality issues.

The following factors have been outlined (for a description of the factor analysis methodology, see Appendix 4):

- **Obedience** implies unconditional trust in the state and delegation of responsibility to the authorities for social development. Consequently, one third of the **Soviet** segment and 55% of **ardent supporters** agree with the statement that obedience and respect for the government are the most important virtues that should be cultivated in children. Compared to analogous data from last year, there is no increase in those who agree with the relevant statements.

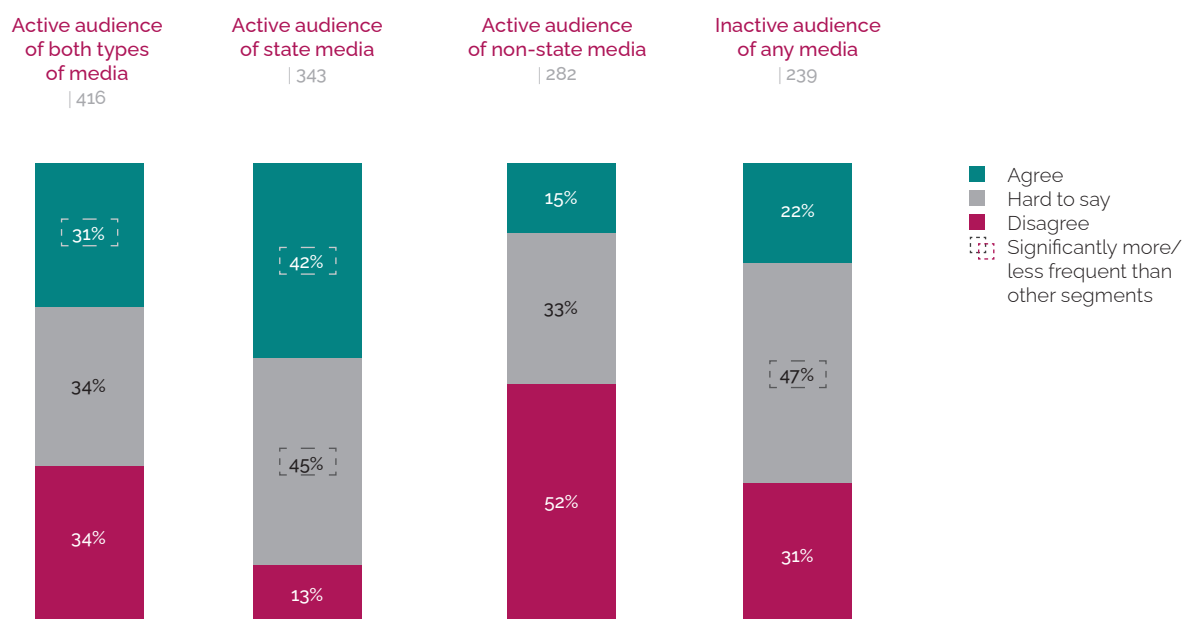
One can nonetheless expect agreement with such statements to increase in the future because there is a negative trend among those who disagree and a corresponding increase in the number of respondents joining the group of doubters (answers "Hard to say"). Specifically, 51% of respondents disagree that obedience and respect for the government are the most important virtues that children should learn (56% in the previous survey wave), while 62% disagree that a citizen should not challenge the state's actions (68% in 2021).

At the same time, respondents are significantly more likely to agree that the state should have the right to force a person to work if necessary (28% and 35% of respondents supporting this statement in 2021 and 2022 respectively). There is also an increase in the number of those who agree that the information about atrocities and crimes committed in 2020 at the behest of the state leaders is greatly exaggerated or invented for propaganda purposes. In 2022 the percentage of those who agree with this statement has increased from 25% to 29%, while the number of those who disagree has dropped noticeably from 41% to 32% (Figure 2.2.).

- **Tolerance of state violence** means approval of violation of law by government representatives in certain cases. In general, some Belarusians (4%) believe that, in order to protect the interests of the state, law enforcement agencies should be allowed to take hostage a criminals' relatives and loved ones. Compared with other parts of society, this indicator among **ardent supporters** is particularly high at 13%. Also, 13% of Belarusians agree that not all people should have the same rights. Low figures for these parameters can probably be explained by people's shock of the magnitude of state violence in 2020 and beyond.

Figure 2.2.

Agreement with the statement "Information about atrocities and crimes in Belarus allegedly at the behest of our state leaders is grossly exaggerated or invented for propaganda purposes"



Source: Answers to the question "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?"

Findings of a 2019 study conducted by the Legal Initiative in cooperation with SATIO suggest that tolerance of state violence is significantly lower among those citizens who reported having experienced it personally.¹²

- **Democratic values** imply awareness of the importance of the inviolability of human dignity, civil control over the incomes and expenditures of state officials and the state in general. No significant dynamics were observed for this factor with 89% of respondents still agreeing that the degradation of human dignity is inadmissible in any case and 61% agreeing that citizens should have the right to control state expenditures.
- **Belief in supernatural forces**, connected with support for archaic or traditional views, points at shifting one's responsibility to external entities and forces. There is a growing support for the statement that astrology can explain many things (30%, up from 26% in the analogous data from the previous year),

which may be linked to an attempt by some parts of society to "explain" the crisis occurring in the outside world. As in the previous year, the **Conscious** was the only segment not "plagued" by belief in the supernatural (Figure 2.3).

- **Intolerance of violence** means "pacifist" and humane attitudes towards own loved ones and other people. Similarly, no changes have been observed in this group of values (Figure 2.4).

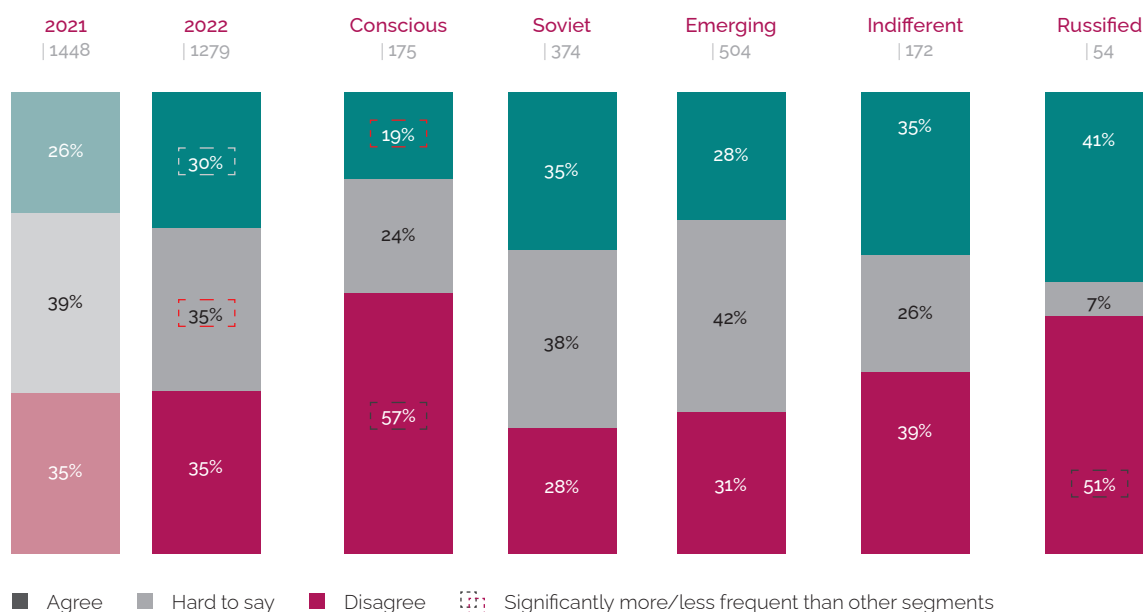
It is therefore safe to say that the public continues to adhere to democratic values, but there is also some disillusionment, coupled with "forgetting" and rewriting of the 2020 events in the media. Specifically, the audience of state media and the audience of both types of media tend to believe that the atrocities of 2020 have been exaggerated for propaganda purposes. As a result one can expect a shift towards obedience to the incumbent authorities in the future (Figure 2.4).

There is a clear link between attitudes towards the nationality issues and differences in attitudes and values: the **Conscious** are notable for their strong adherence to democratic values and intolerance for violence; the latter is also very typical for the **Emerging** segment. It is noteworthy that the **Russified** vividly express seemingly mutually-exclusive components — obedience and tolerance of state violence, on the one hand, and democratic values, on the

¹² Измерение уровня толерантности белорусов к государственному насилию: отчет по результатам исследования // Правозащитники против пыток, март–апрель 2019 г. / *Measuring Belarusians' tolerance of state violence: A Report on survey results* // *Human rights defenders against torture, March-April 2019*

Figure 2.3.

Agreement with the statement "Although many people do not believe in astrology, it has probably yet to be proven that astrology can explain many things"



ИСТОЧНИК: Answers to the question "How do you agree or disagree with the following statements?"

other. At the same time, they are probably more likely to justify violence of any kind and shift responsibility to the state and supernatural forces (Figure 2.5).

The Soviet segment is characterised by extreme obedience, tolerance of state violence, and belief in the supernatural.

which is probably owing to an increased sense of responsibility for Belarus's role in the conflict.

Compared to last year, society tends to grant lesser importance to domestic political problems, predominantly those that have emerged as a result of the political crisis of 2020. This can probably be attributed to a general shift towards paternalism.

2.3. BURNING ISSUES IN BELARUSIAN SOCIETY

Belarusian society is polarised in its assessment of the path of the country's development: the **Conscious**, as the most nationally-oriented group, are extremely unhappy with the current state of affairs, while the **Soviet**, on the contrary, are largely satisfied with it. Large parts of society beyond these groups, however, often find it difficult to answer the question, especially the **Emerging**. However, the urban population shows a considerable shift towards being satisfied with the general direction of the Belarusian state's development during the past year.

For Belarusians, the most important problems are those of an economic nature – rising prices and low wages, though the problems caused by the Russia-Ukraine war are also considered rather serious. The only exception is the **Conscious** segment which shows greater concern for internal political problems,

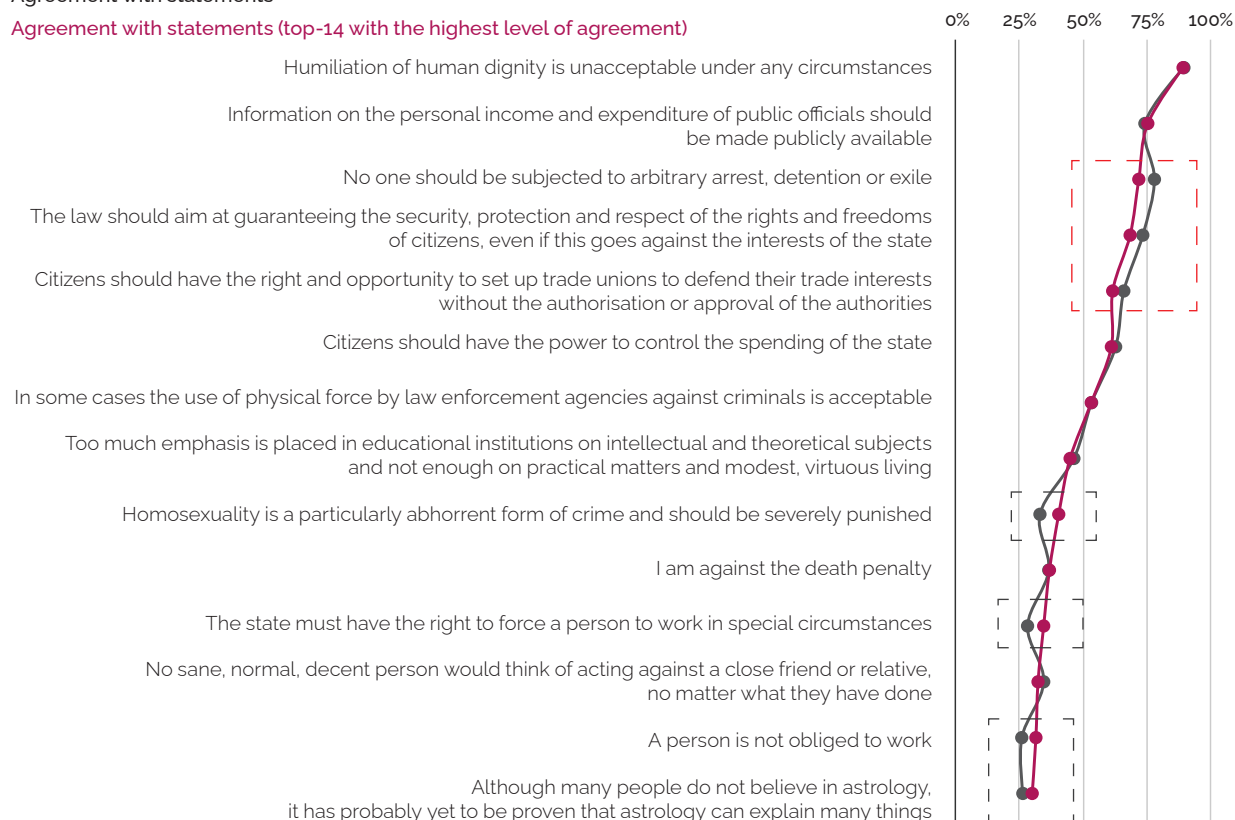
Society is still split in its assessments of the general direction of Belarus's development. The two most opposed segments are starkly different in their assessments: for example, only 3% of the **Conscious** are satisfied with the direction of the state's development during the last year, whereas among the **Soviet** segment, the level of satisfaction reaches 60% (Figure 2.6).

There is a good reason why the two most patriotic segments are so polarised in their assessments of the situation: the pro-Belarusian **Conscious** cannot come to terms with the current state of affairs and are likely to react strongly to the country's increasing orientation towards Russia and its role in the Russia-Ukraine war. They are also disappointed, and perhaps feel defeated, in their fight against the government which began in August 2020. In the meantime, representatives of the **Soviet** segment, who are nostalgic for the USSR and believe in a national idea but do not interpret it with reference to contemporary geographic boundaries, are naturally happy about the country's orientation towards Russia. Perhaps they feel that keeping the current regime in power "reinforces" the

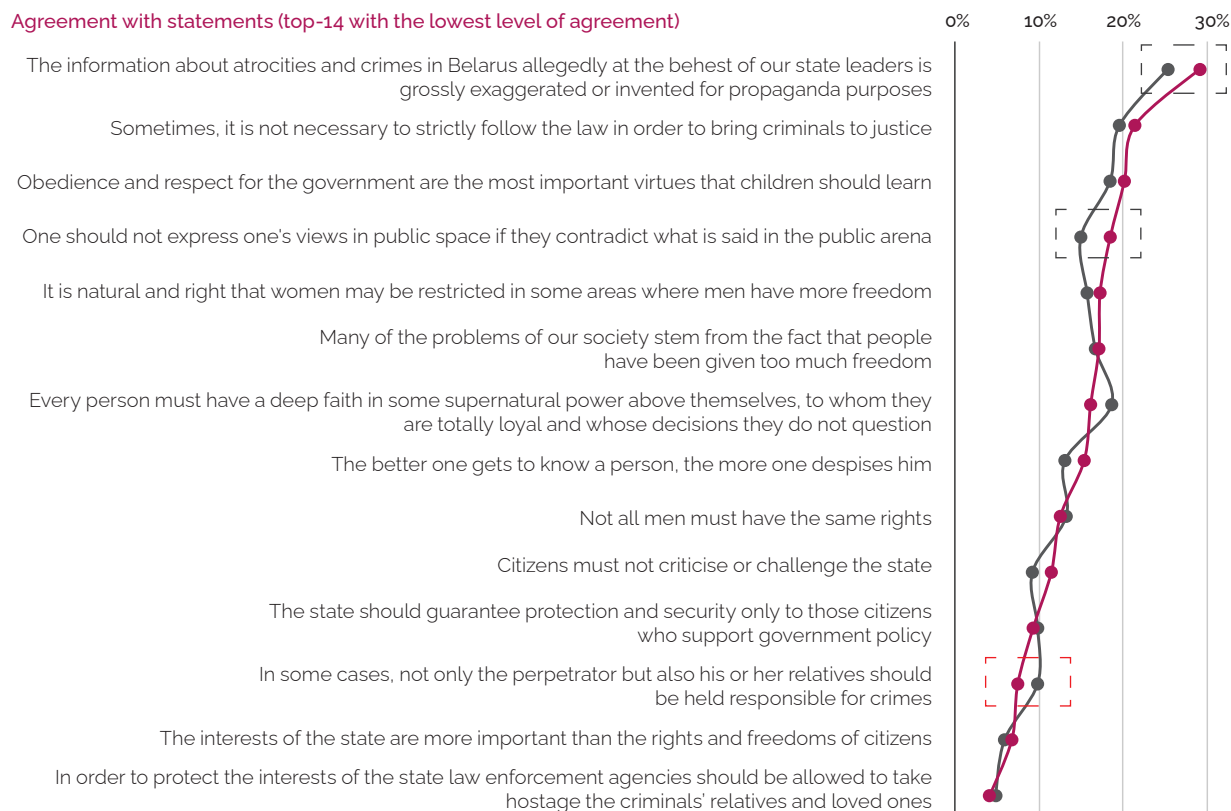
Figure 2.4.

Agreement with statements

Agreement with statements (top-14 with the highest level of agreement)



Agreement with statements (top-14 with the lowest level of agreement)



■ 2021 ■ 2022 □ Significantly more/less frequent than other segments

Source: Answers to the question "How do you agree or disagree with the following statements?"

Figure 2.5.
Expression of factors according to segment on nationality issues

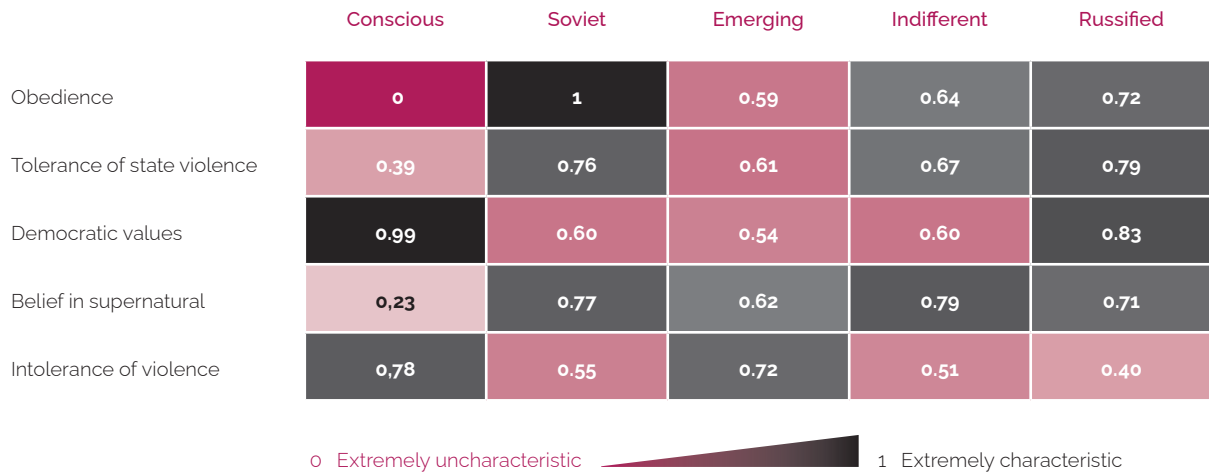
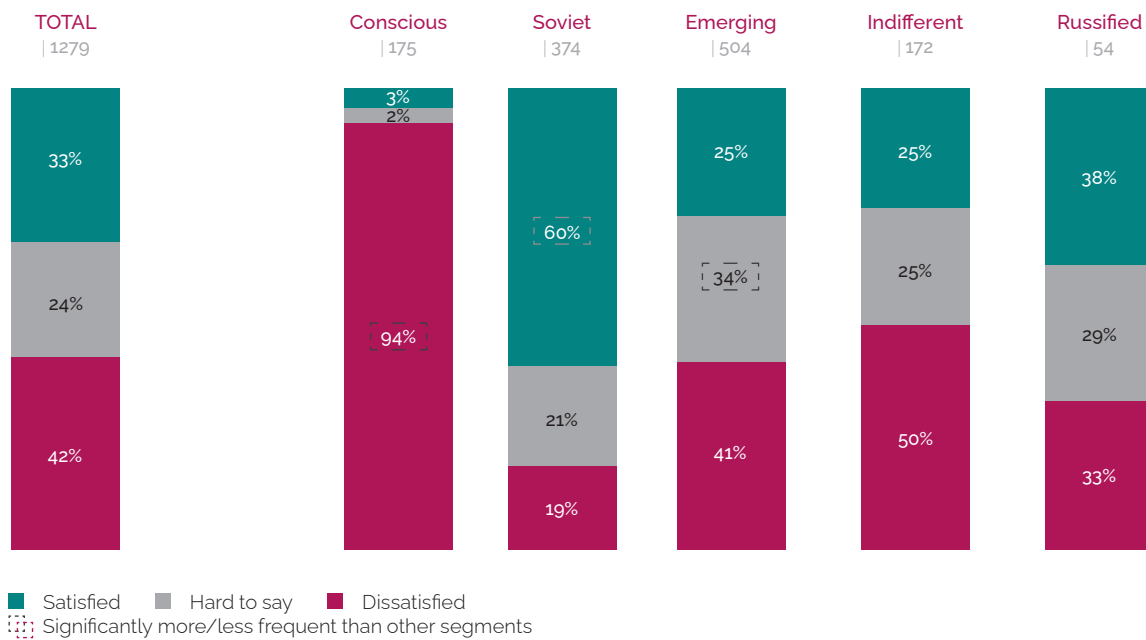


Figure 2.6.
Satisfaction with the general direction of the state's development in the last year, by segment



Source: Answers to the question 'How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the general direction of the Belarusian state's development over the past year?'

connection to Russia and that, without the incumbent regime, these links may be severed, causing fear and discontent within this segment.

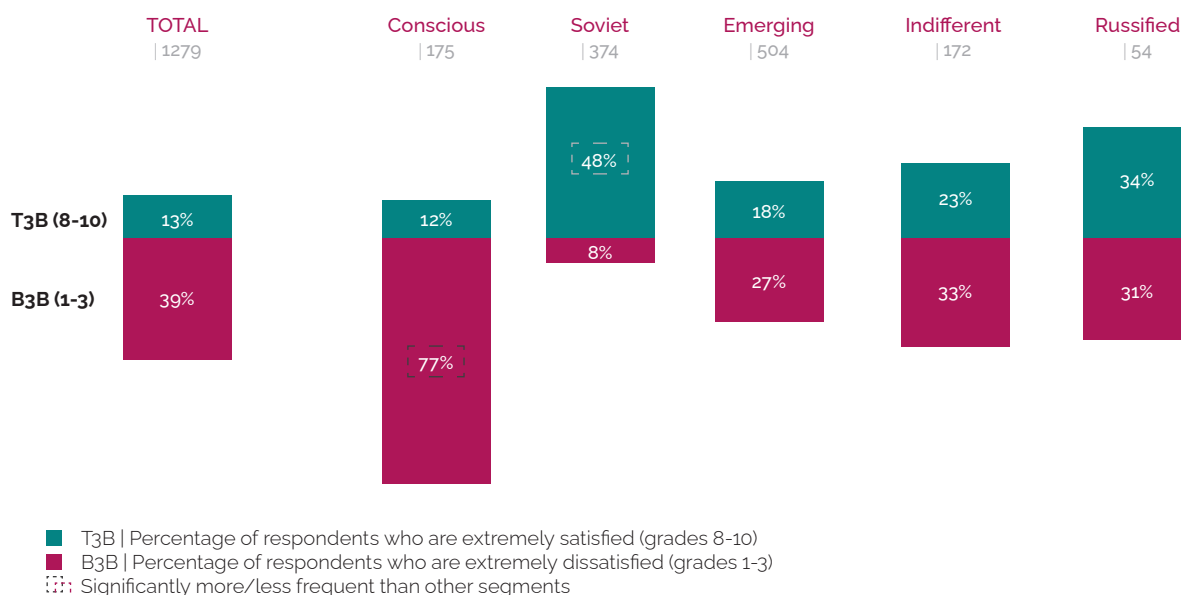
The **Conscious** were the only ones who had no difficulty answering the question about the country's development: almost everyone in this group (94%) is unhappy with the country's development, probably because they continue "living" the events of 2020 and have only strengthened their opinion by what they see as extremely negative actions by

the state in the Russia-Ukraine war. This segment is immersed in a particularly durable information bubble with more than half of its members being an active audience of non-state media.

Instead, many representatives of other segments found this question difficult to answer — from 21% among the **Soviet** to 34% among the **Emerging**. Such a distribution can be explained by reluctance to engage in politics and trace government activities in media, by a general

Figure 2.7.

Assessment of satisfaction with the general direction of Belarus's development, by segment



Source: Answers to the question 'How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the general direction of the Belarusian state's development over the past year? Mark on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 - totally satisfied, 10 - totally dissatisfied'.

blurring of the current situation owing to, first, propaganda, secondly, the media spreading ambivalent messages concerning the same issue, which makes it truly difficult for the audience to acquire a clear understanding of the situation, and finally by the segments' underdeveloped notion of national identity. Nor should one ignore the influence of the fear factor in answering such questions. The first two reasons are indirectly confirmed by the fact that, among the segments in terms of media consumption, the **active audience of state media** (30%) and the **inactive audience of any media** (33%) have the highest proportions of those unable to answer the question.

As for the groups based on the trust in the state, the **ardent opponents** and **ardent supporters** hold strictly opposite positions when talking about the direction of the country's development: 94% of **ardent opponents** are unhappy, whereas 87% of **ardent supporters** are satisfied with the current situation. In contrast, one third of the centrists, who may be leaning to either side, were unable to answer the question.

It should be noted, however, that there has been a considerable shift towards satisfaction with the general direction of the Belarusian state's development during the past year across all population groups; even some of the **Conscious** have been extremely satisfied (12%, compared to just 5% in 2021), which may stem from the fear factor and an attempt to give a socially-appropriate response (Figure 2.7).

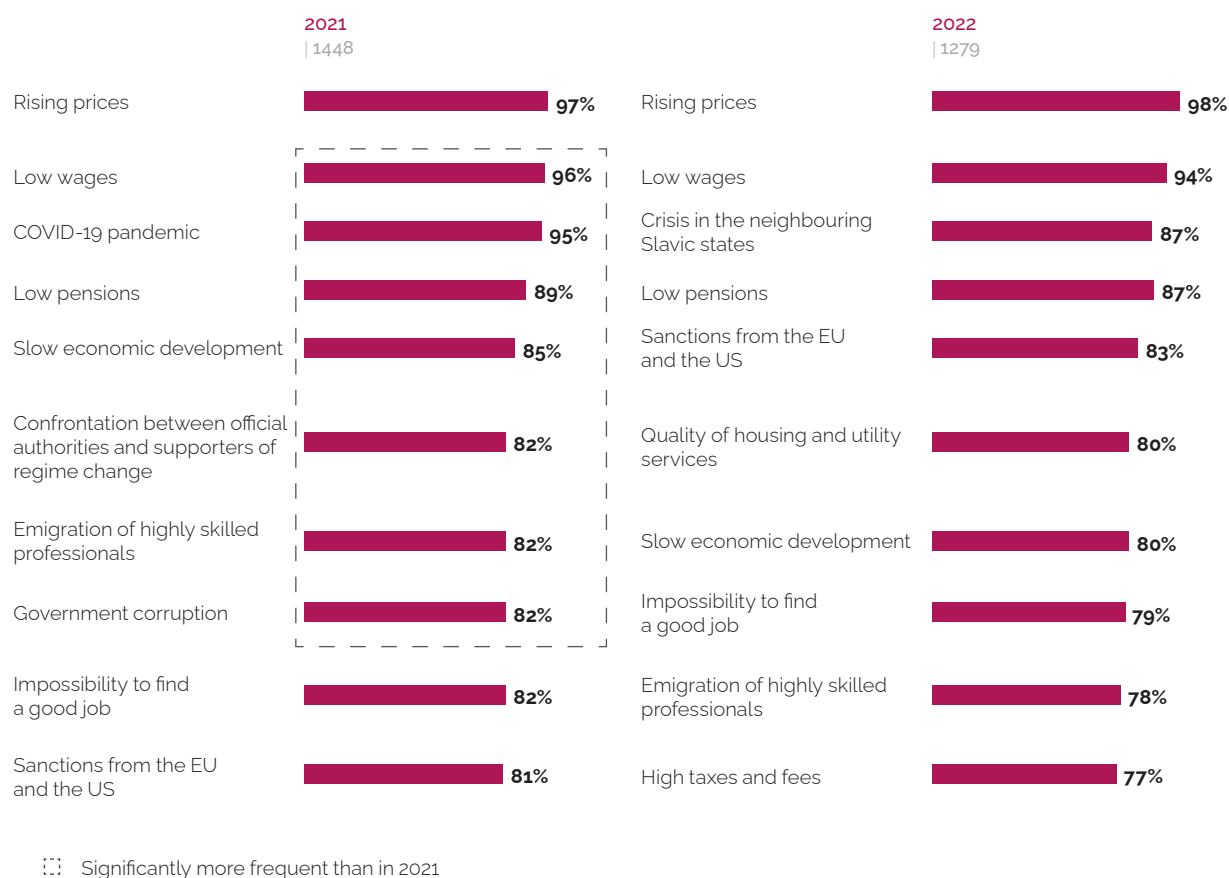
The overall growth in satisfaction reached 14%, with the number of those totally dissatisfied down by 9%, mostly thanks to the **Soviet** (+28%, compared to 2021) and the **Russified** (+30%) segments. These groups usually answer such questions similarly. The Belarus Change Tracker survey draws similar conclusions from its analysis. The government's rhetoric that the country won't be dragged into war probably finds support with audiences, especially the "conditionally centrist" segments. As a result, the segments proceed from an "it-could-be-worse" position and therefore assess the country's development favourably. At the same time, one can expect a decline in such attitudes and assessments in the future, as higher assessments of the country's situation are now given by rather plastic parts of society.¹³

The most burning issues are still of an economic nature — price hikes, low wages and pensions — and this is very typical for Belarusian society according to various measures. For example, the extremely high relevance of rising prices and low incomes was recorded back in 2019.¹⁴ Nevertheless, political problems included in the top five problems included the war between Russia and Ukraine (87%) and sanctions by the European Union and the United States

13 P. Slunkin, A. Shraibman, P. Bikanau, H. Korshunau, K. Bornukova, L. Lvovskiy, *Belarus Change Tracker. Expert Assessments*, February-May 2022

14 Урбан Д. Ценности населения Беларуси: результаты национального опроса населения, Исследовательский центр ИПМ, 2019 / D. Urban, *Values of the population of Belarus: results of a national population survey*, IPM Research Centre, 2019

Figure 2.8.
Top 10 problems of modern Belarus



Source: Answers to the question "Which of the following, in your opinion, can be considered the important problems of modern Belarus?"

(which continue to produce the same level of concern) (Figure 2.9).

In other words, citizens are well aware of the relevance of war for Belarus and probably feel its proximity due to the involvement of two "brotherly" neighbouring countries in it, as well as Belarus's role in the conflict.

In general, compared to last year, the COVID-19 pandemic has lost relevance as a perceived problem, as have problems of police abuse and bias in the Belarusian courts (Figure 2.9).

Based on the factor analysis of respondents' answers about burning issues, and whether the respondents have encountered them and see them as a threat to themselves and society, four groups of problems have been identified in which segments defined by the criterion of trust in government show significant differences (see Appendix 4 for more detail on the factor analysis procedure):

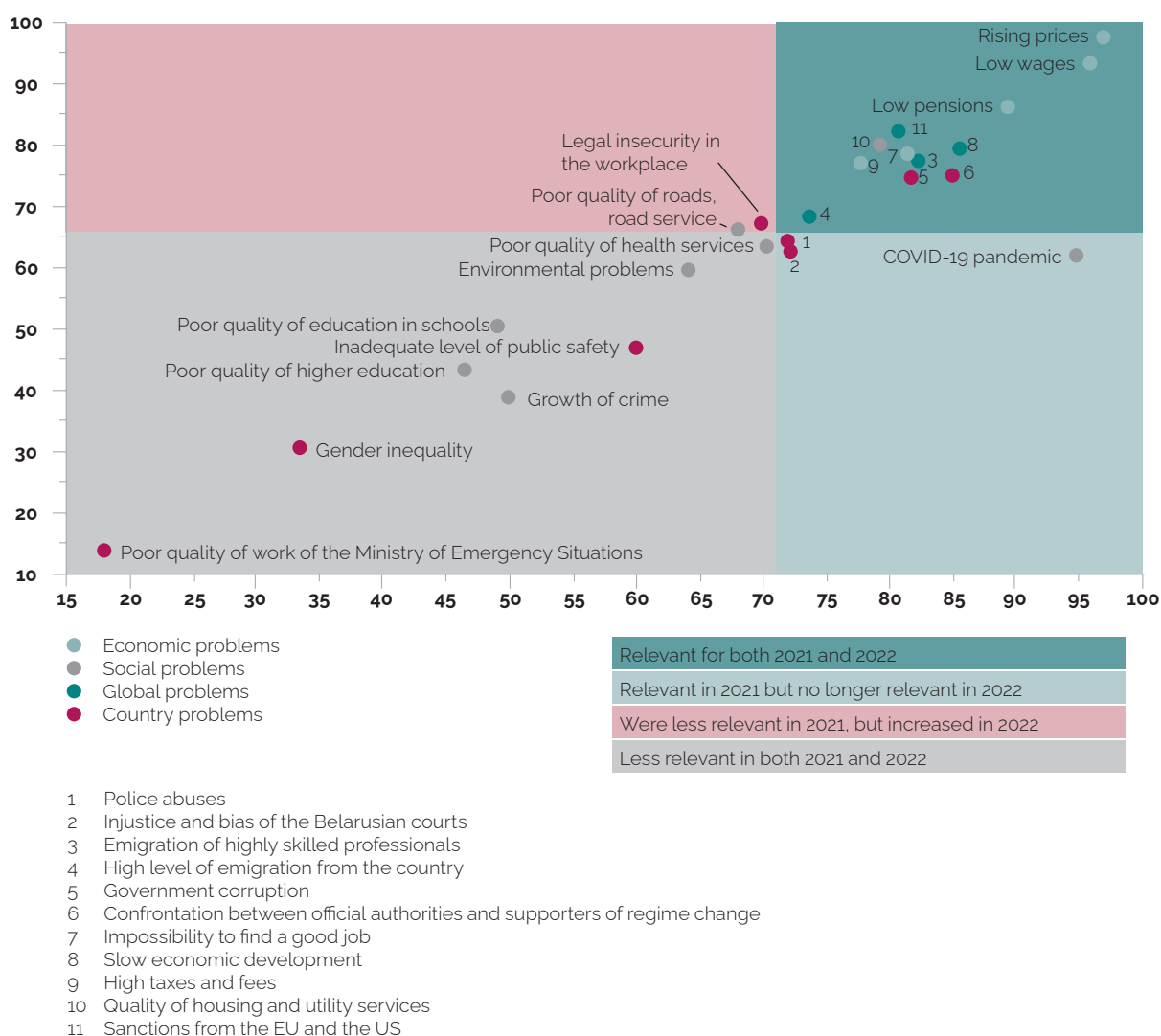
- For **ardent opponents**, it is very typical to perceive problems in the country as acute. Moreover, they are more likely to take notice of global problems.

- On the contrary, **ardent supporters'** perception of the importance of economic, global and domestic problems is weaker. At the same time, it is much more typical for them to attach greater salience to social problems.
- The "centrist" segments gravitate to one of these opposite groups, but **more like supporters** stress higher relevance to economic problems.

In addition, there are some changes in the assessment of factor components compared to last year:

- Domestic political problems are less frequently listed as burning issues. Such problems include government corruption, confrontation between the official authorities and the supporters of regime change, police abuse, low level of public security, injustice, and bias in Belarusian courts.
- Respondents tend to less frequently mention various global problems: emigration of highly skilled specialists, slowdown of economic development, and the high level of emigration from the country in general. Domestic and foreign-policy problems have retained their

Figure 2.9.
Intersection in the assessment of burning issues in 2021 and 2022



Source: Answers to the question "Which of the following, in your opinion, can be considered the important problems of modern Belarus?"

relevance for the **Conscious** and **ardent opponents** alone.

- Respondents assessed the economic situation somewhat more positively, while less frequently mentioning problems of low wages and pensions.
- As for social problems, the significance of environmental problems and the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the growth of crime, has notably decreased. However, most problems remained relevant, and the ten most burning issues includes the quality of the housing and the utilities sector.

In other words, there has been a decline in public interest in political and legal issues, especially those "identified" by society during the political crisis of 2020. For most of society, excluding the **Conscious**, these issues are probably superseded by the Russia-Ukraine war. The latter is considered one of the most important problems; for the same reason,

the sanctions that followed the current Belarusian government's steps and decisions have not lost their relevance.

Different segments perceive the relevance and importance of the war differently. Although all segments agree that this problem exists (the **Conscious** — 91%, the **Emerging** — 84%, the **Soviet** — 89%, the **Russified** — 84%, and the **Indifferent** — 86%), only the **Russified** (23%) consider the war to be the most important problem. Being very much oriented towards Russia, they probably absorb messages from both the Belarusian and Russian state media about the threat from the West.

In the structure of problems, the topic of war for the **Soviet**, the **Emerging** and the **Indifferent** segments is higher than in the perception of the **Conscious**. Instead, the latter view confrontation between the official authorities and the supporters of regime change (36%), the injustice and bias of the Belarusian courts (34%), and police abuses (29%) as the three

most important problems. At the same time, the **Conscious** are much more likely to admit having personally faced the consequences of war-related problems (19%). This segment probably feels the utmost personal responsibility for Belarus's role in the Russia-Ukraine war and believes that a change of power and "liberation" of the Belarusian people from "occupation" should be solved immediately. These theses are repeatedly articulated by opposition politicians — members of democratic forces and in the media.^{15,16} Moreover, according to studies of Belarusians abroad, no less than one third of respondents blame Belarus for the outbreak of war, roughly the same number still feels guilty for the involvement of their country in the war, and over 70% are ready to continue helping Ukraine.¹⁷

In general, the **Conscious, active audience of non-state media**, and **ardent opponents** are most likely to note the presence of almost all problems.

Much more indicative is respondents' choices of the most important problems from the list of previously-selected issues: six of the top ten are economic, with rising prices and low wages being the most acute ones (45% and 42%, respectively). Both problems are considered more important than in the previous year. According to Belarusians, the EU and US sanctions, as well as crisis in the neighbouring Slavic states, are also among the top 10 problems, which, however, are less acute (13% and 12%, respectively).

The confrontation between the official authorities and the supporters of regime change rounds out the top ten problems with 10% of the answers, received mainly from the **Conscious** (36%), which is significantly less frequent than in 2021 for the entire sample. Meanwhile, very negative relations between the opposite segments remain in place (see Section 2.4), as confirmed by a number of studies, including the Belarus Change Tracker, which used the Bogardus social distance scale. According to the Belarus Change Tracker findings, those groups in society that are perceived as close to ardent opponents are viewed negatively by those inclined to trust the government and ardent supporters; similarly, the attitude towards the structures supported by ardent opponents is extremely intolerant among those inclined to trust

and ardent supporters.¹⁸ Such a low assessment of the relevance of confrontation between the two political blocs is probably connected with the subjective feeling of "victory" among supporters of the authorities, whereas the **Conscious** assess the relevance higher, because for them the struggle continues and remains a serious problem.

Compared to last year, Belarusians were more likely to report having personally faced problems related to low wages, rising prices, high taxes, as well as sanctions and the outflow of professionals from the country. Social problems were also mentioned more frequently, namely the work of housing and utility services, the quality of education and the quality of roads. Less frequent were mentions of the confrontation between the authorities and its opponents (Figure 2.10). Something very similar can be expected in the future: economic problems, difficulties in finding a job, and the effects of EU and US sanctions.

Nevertheless, some parts of society feel all the problems more acutely: the **Conscious** and **ardent opponents** of the authorities are much more likely to report encountering problems that are specifically related to Belarus, as well as some social problems. They also expect to see the same problems in the future (Figure 2.11).

Belarusians are also generally more likely than last year to declare that all rights and freedoms in Belarus are respected, although opponents of the ruling government think the opposite. The strongest shift in assessments of observance of values can be seen among the **Soviet** and **Indifferent**: members of these segments tend to agree that all rights are observed, and this occurs more often than in the previous two years. Interestingly, the view on the observance of free elections among the **Emerging** has changed significantly over the two years: if during the previous survey waves only 28% claimed that this right was respected, then in 2022, as many as 40% of the Emerging hold this opinion. This is probably due to either the reaction to the war, or a willingness to "join the strongest", or subjective perceptions of risk associated with the "wrong answer" (e.g. that rights are not respected). It is also possible that this answer was influenced by a widespread belief in Belarus that if a coup took place in 2020, Belarus would have suffered the fate of Ukraine.^{19,20} This is how this group is now "justifying" the results of the 2020 election (Figure 2.12).

15 Казнить нельзя помиловать: Нерешительность Европейского союза в расстановке запятой означает отсутствие воли в принятии решения, Народное Антикризисное Управление, 25.05.2022 / *Execute not pardon: European Union's indecisiveness in putting comma down means lack of will in decision-making, People's Anti-Crisis Management, 25 May 2022*

16 «Нет мира для Украины без свободы для Беларуси». Мировые СМИ о второй годовщине белорусских протестов, MedialQ, 11.08.2022 / *"No peace for Ukraine without freedom for Belarus". World media on 2nd anniversary of Belarus protests, MedialQ, 11 August 2022*

17 Алампиев О., Биканов Ф. Беларусь в Польше, Литве, Грузии: Отношение к войне, помощь Украине, дискриминация, FES, 2022 / *O. Alampiev, F. Bikanov, Belarusians in Poland, Lithuania, Georgia: Attitude to war, assistance to Ukraine, discrimination, FES, 2022*

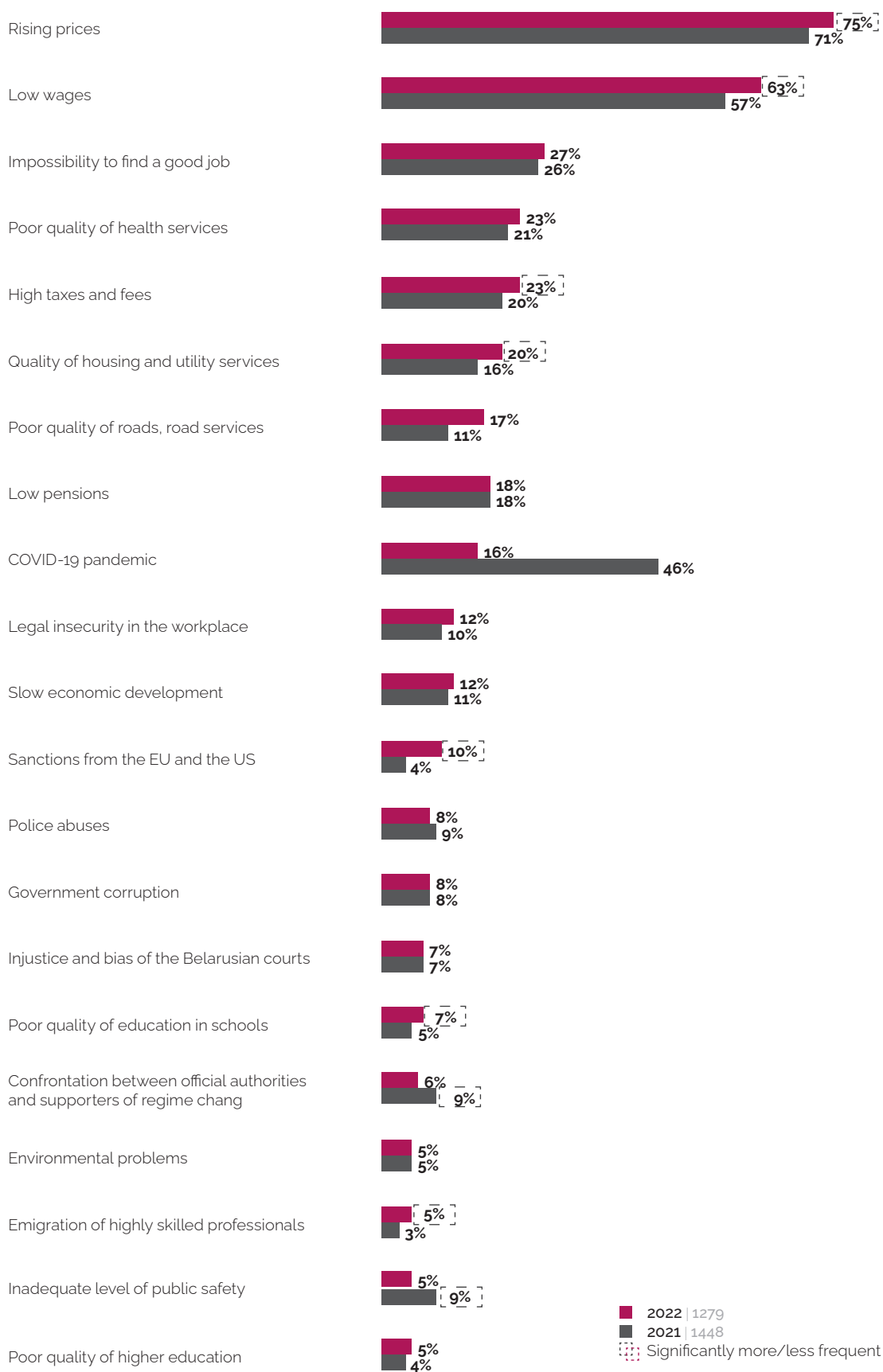
18 P. Slunkin, A. Shraibman, P. Bikanau, H. Korshunau, K. Bornukova, L. Lvovskiy, Belarus Change Tracker. Expert Assessments, February-May 2022

19 Лукашенко спас Беларусь от вторжения России? Посмотрели за вас госТВ и рассказываем, как там говорят о войне в Украине, Зеркало, 10.03.2022 / *Did Lukashenka save Belarus from Russian invasion? We watched some state TV for you and now we will tell how they talk about the war in Ukraine, Zerkalo, 10 March 2022*

20 Александр Лукашенко рассказал, как спас Беларусь, Точка, 12.07.2022 / *Alyaksandr Lukashenka told how he saved Belarus, Tochka, 12 July 2022*

Figure 2.10.

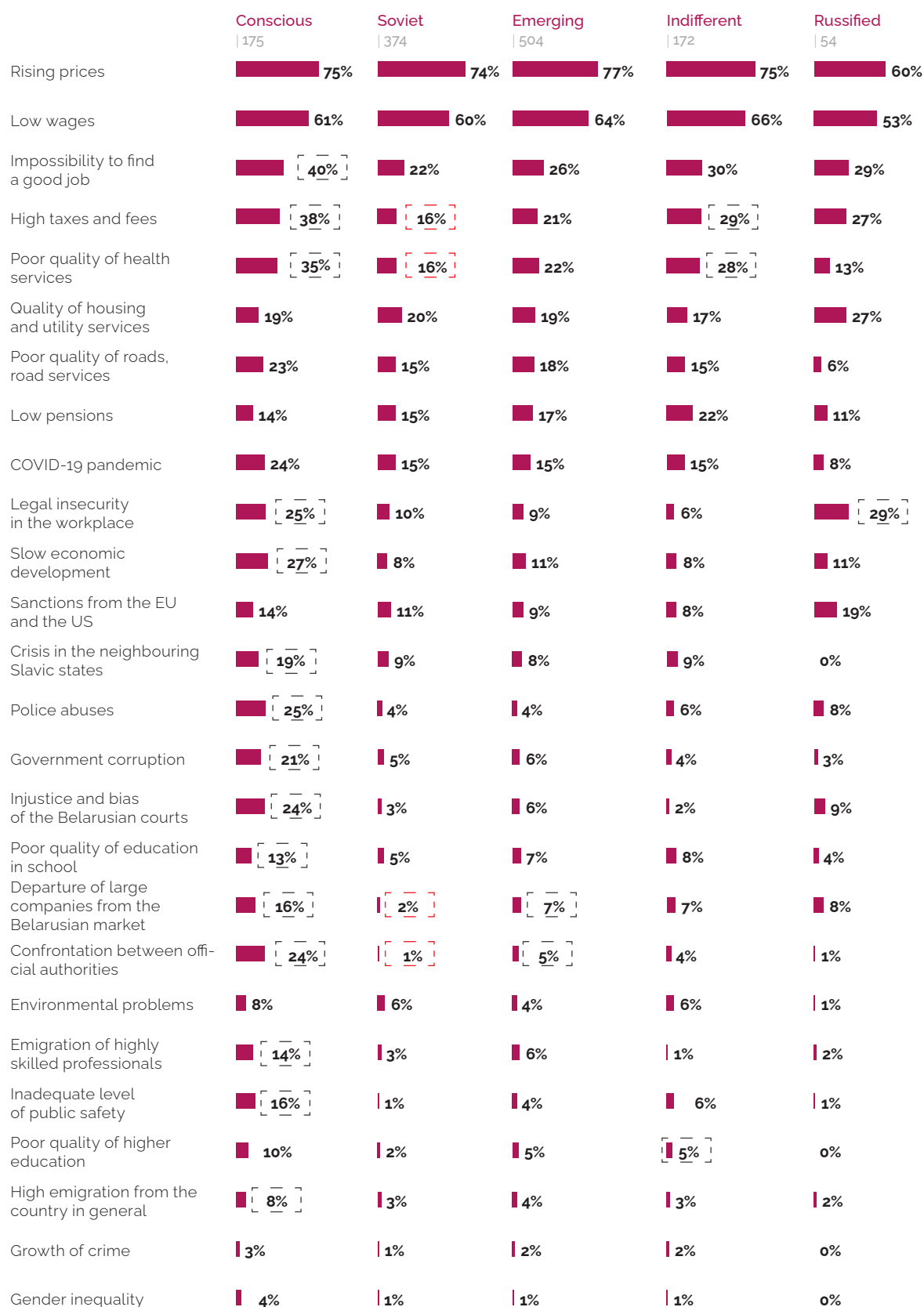
Opinions on problems that have personally affected respondents, by year



Source: Answers to the question "Which of the problems have affected or are affecting you personally?"

Figure 2.11.

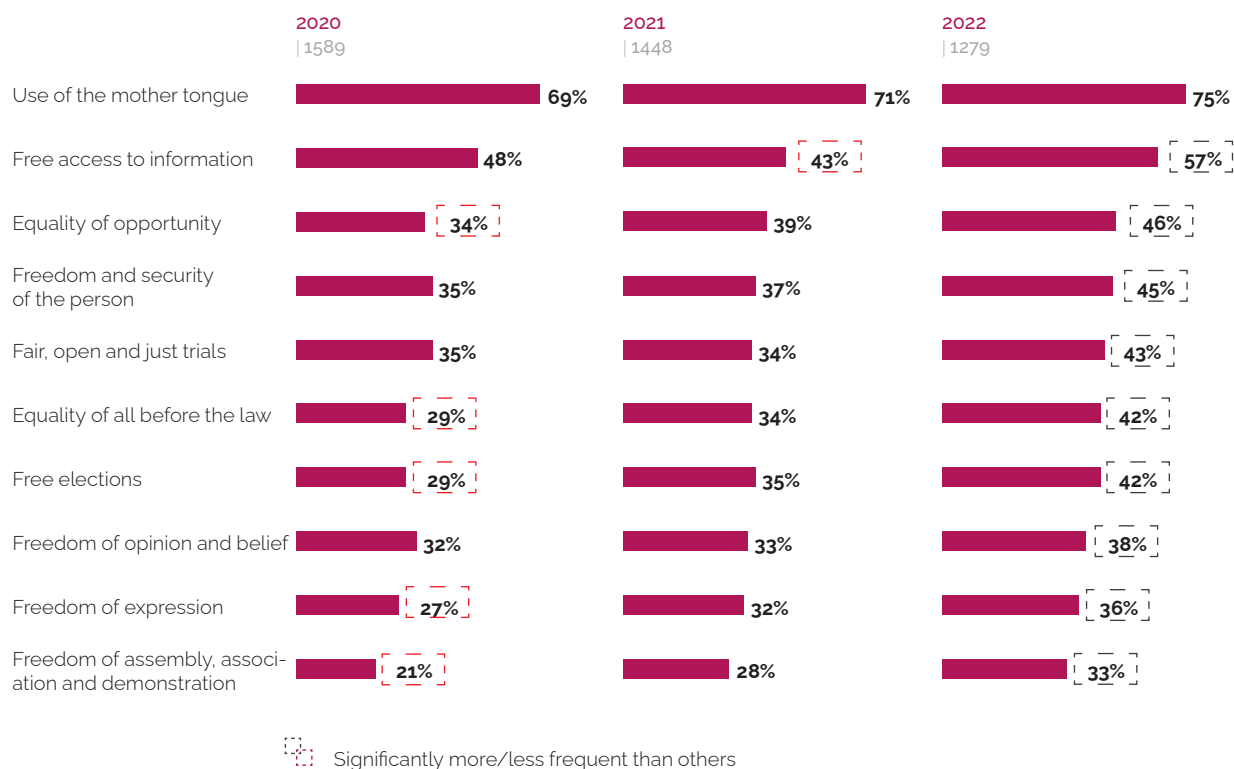
Opinions on problems that have personally affected respondents, by segment



Significantly more/less frequent than others

Source: Answers to the question "Which of the problems have affected or are affecting you personally?"

Figure 2.12.
Opinions on the rights respected in Belarus



Source: Answers to the question "To what extent are the following rights and freedoms respected or not respected in Belarus?"

2.4. TRUST IN DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONS

Paternalistic mindsets also manifest themselves in increasing trust in state structures and decreasing trust in groups of people who took part in the 2020 events on the side of the opposition.

The biggest shifts are observed in the conditionally centrist segments, while the groups of **ardent supporters** and **ardent opponents** have entirely contradictory levels of trust in various institutions and groups: both groups dislike each other and no doubt consider their opponents a danger to them.

Compared to the previous measure in 2021, citizens have generally demonstrated a significant increase in trust in the official government structures, law enforcement agencies and state media, while there is also a decreasing trust in those who do not support the authorities, and in those involved in 2020's events. The shift towards "paternalism" is most strongly felt among centrists; a segment which does not usually speak out unequivocally "for" or "against" the authorities (Figure 2.13).

This is best explained by the war. It makes it easier for the conditional "centrists" to explain the necessity of the

Lukashenka regime staying in power in Belarus. The regime uses state media to promote a "convenient" position for the centrists regarding the conflict – conditional "neutrality" of the country and non-interference in direct military actions.

In addition, the centrists' position could also be explained by their perception of the current government as the only one capable of preserving Belarus's sovereignty in a situation of potential and real Russian military aggression against its neighbours. According to Chatham House polls, Belarusians are afraid of war and for this reason are consolidating around Lukashenka's figure and his position.²¹

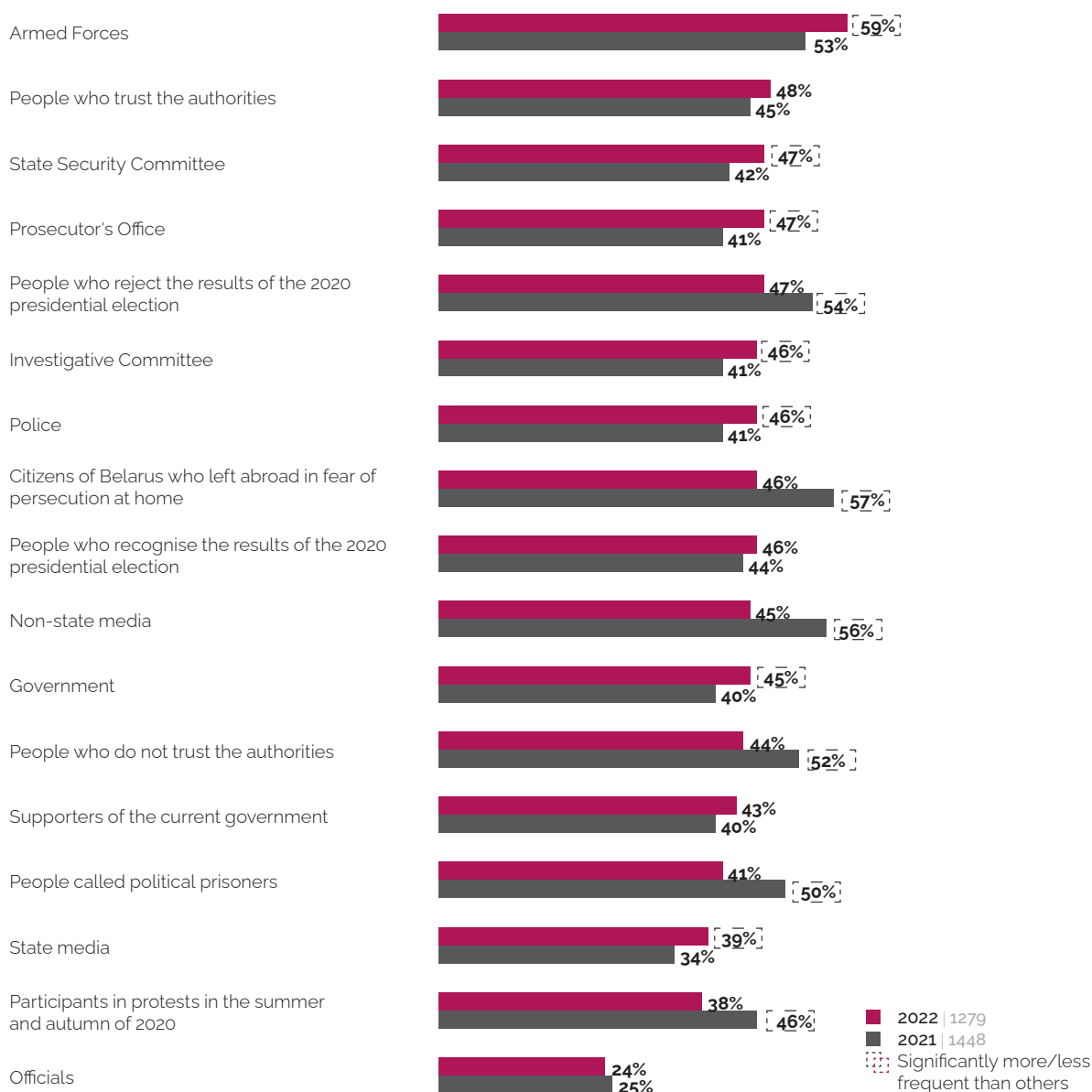
There is a strong social tension between the two groups, which differ in their level of trust in state structures:

- **Ardent opponents** of the incumbent authorities and the **Conscious** are extremely distrustful of any state institutions and people supporting the official government; they are noted for an acute sense of danger on the part of these bodies.

²¹ How Belarusians' views on the war have changed over six months, Chatham House, August 2021

Figure 2.13.

Level of trust in various institutions



Source: Answers to the question 'How much do you trust or distrust the following organisations, institutions, and representatives of social or professional groups?'

- **Ardent supporters** and the **Soviet** segments are extremely distrustful of "independent" institutions and opponents of the incumbent government (Figure 2.14).

These two groups are extremely hostile towards each other. Their members see the "alternative side" as dangerous for themselves and for society. And this seems to be an entrenched animosity. According to a Chatham House poll²² of 1–10 November 2021, there is social tension between

similarly profiled segments: "There is a significant mutual rejection between the hardcore protester and Lukashenka's base segments." At the same time, the former does not perceive the state as "its own" because it and its apparatus pose a danger, while Lukashenka's base adheres to voluntary paternalism.

Similar antagonism is observed among the segments identified based on attitudes to nationality issues. Thus, the **Conscious** and the **Soviet** do not trust institutions embodying the regime and which do not support. At the same time, the **Conscious** are likely to feel that the state is wholly on the side of that part of society that supports the system (Figure 2.15).

²² Belarusians' views on the political crisis, Chatham House, November 2021

Figure 2.14.
Trust in different institutions depending on trust in authorities, %



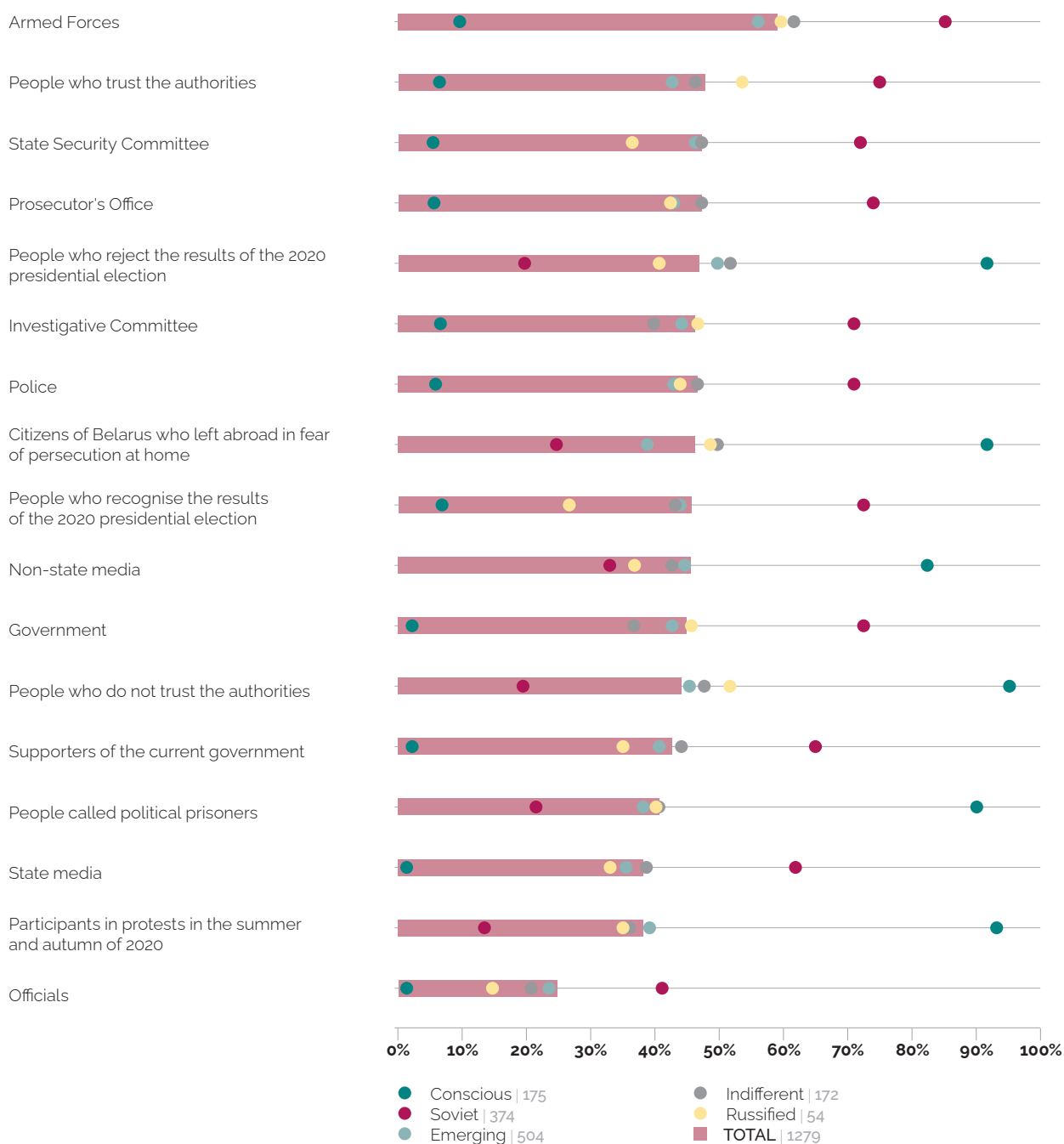
Source: Answers to the question "How much do you trust or distrust the following organisations, structures, representatives of social or professional groups?"

It is also important to note the downward trend in trust in non-state media among the **Conscious**: compared to 2021, the level of trust in non-state media has dropped by 11% (from 93% to 82%). Similar trends can be observed among the centrist segments, the **Indifferent** and the **Emerging**. At the same time, the position of principled **ardent opponents** has not changed, but there is a noticeable decline (-13%) in the segment of **moderate opponents**. Decrease of trust in non-state media may explain the increasing trust in state institutions in general and simultaneous decreasing trust of the government's opponents.

In addition, opinions about who poses a danger to society have changed compared to last year. Consequently,

participants in the 2020 protests and those who do not recognise the election are among the top five dangers to society, which may be directly linked to decreasing trust in non-state media, as well as "rallying round the flag" against the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine war and the feeling that only the government could preserve the integrity of the country. The shift towards perceiving these groups as dangerous occurred thanks to the **Emerging** and the **Soviet**, who increasingly mentioned those who rejected the 2020 election as dangerous, and at the expense of all segments who are now less likely to note the danger from the armed forces, the police, the Investigative Committee and the Prosecutor's Office. This may be due to the fact that it is natural for human mind to "involuntarily

Figure 2.15.
Share of those who trust different institutions, by segment



Source: Answers to the question 'How much do you trust or distrust the following organisations, structures, representatives of social or professional groups?'

tune in critically to those positions defended by the anti-political... communicator".²³ In other words, one can expect that

the trust in the "protest" institutions will further decrease if the level of trust in the non-state Belarusian mass media continues to fall.

²³ Надирашвили Ш.А. Психология пропаганды. Глава 9. «Влияние межличностных отношений на формирование установок к различным явлениям» / Sh. Nadirashvili, *The Psychology of Propaganda. Chapter 9. 'The Impact of Interpersonal Relations on the Formation of Attitudes to Various Phenomena'*

3

FOREIGN POLICY IN THE PUBLIC OPINION OF BELARUSIANS

Foreign policy represents state's actions in relation to other states, unions, international organisations and other actors of international relations. In order to analyse the link between Belarusians' national identity and their foreign policy assessments, the researchers asked questions about their attitude to joining the European Union, integration with Russia, attitude towards other countries, and perceptions of those countries' image and to identify the "vectors" of adherence to political powerhouses such as the West.

Most Belarusians lack a strong adherence to either Russia or the West, which constitute the two key "vectors" of Belarus's foreign policy. Most Belarusians would like their country either to cooperate with all foreign partners outside of alliances or be in an alliance with both Russia and the West simultaneously. Moreover, most Belarusians have a positive attitude to all countries, although such attitudes are especially typical for the **Emerging** and the **Indifferent**. At the same time, supporters of neutrality tend to be pro-European, but they prefer a neutral status for Belarus out of pragmatic considerations, not wanting to join any side in the Russia-Ukraine war and seeking to benefit from cooperation with all.

The **Conscious** tend to be more committed to the European vector; as with supporters of neutrality, so the Conscious explain their choice by pragmatic considerations, including the opportunities for development and improved living standards. Members of this segment view Russia very negatively, associating it with aggression and support of the Lukashenka regime.

The **Russified** and the **Soviet** segments are advocates of a formal alliance with Russia. They are mainly driven by traditionalist motives of shared history and the idea Belarusians and Russians constitute a single nation. As consumers of state media, supporters of the union with Russia consider it a highly-developed and powerful country; they are also

pleased by Russia's support of the incumbent authorities in Belarus. In this sense, supporters of the Russian vector differ in their motivation from the majority of Belarusians. At the same time, even supporters of deeper integration with Russia do not support the merger of the two states' main institutions.

3.1. PERCEPTION OF BELARUS'S INTERNATIONAL ORIENTATION

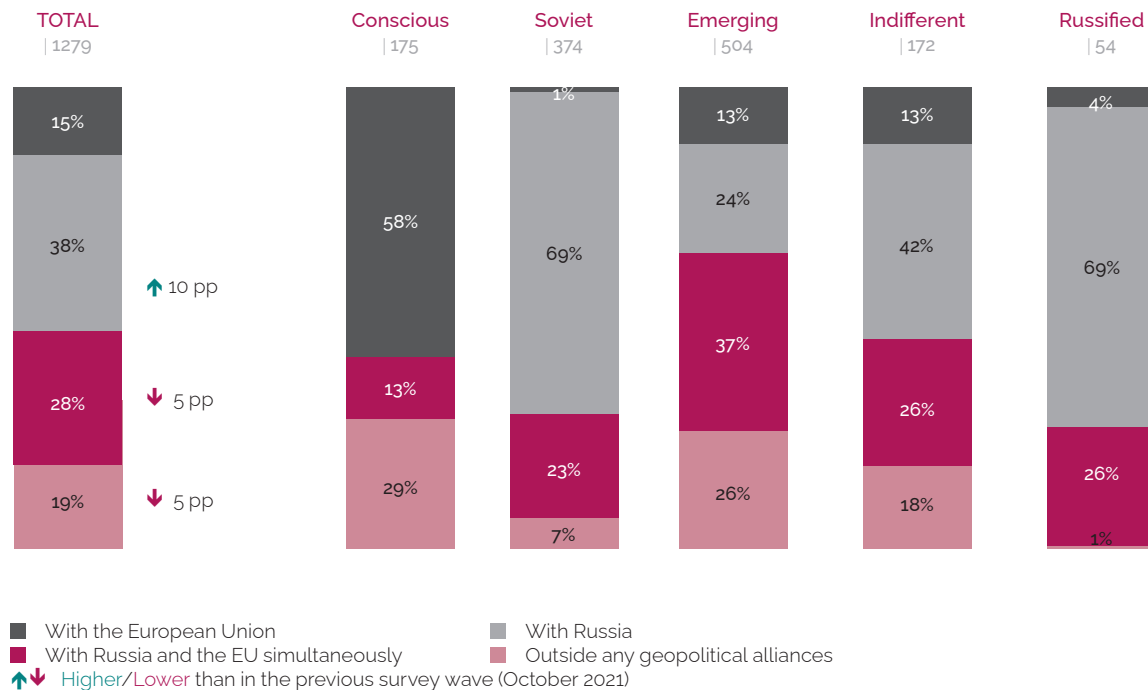
Neutrality, with the support of half of all Belarusians, is the most popular policy preference in international relations. Pragmatism explains this preference. Belarusians are afraid of joining any party to the conflict while wanting to benefit from cooperation with the parties. At the same time, supporters of neutrality are generally pro-European — if neutrality were not feasible, they would shift to closer ties with the EU, and in this case their motivation is as pragmatic as the motivation of the pro-European core. About one third of Belarusians support a foreign policy primarily oriented towards Russia. These people are noted for their strong Russian identity, nostalgia for the Soviet Union, and support for the authorities.

The largest share of Belarusians still aspire to neutrality, preferring either a simultaneous alliance with Russia and the EU, or a position outside of any international alliances.

At the same time, over the past year support for neutrality weakened due to the growth of pro-Russian sentiment (Figure 3.1). Chatham House surveys show similar dynamics.²⁴ This trend can be attributed to the aggravation of contradictions in the region which has encouraged some who favoured neutrality in the past, but had pro-Russian inclinations, to decide on their position. In addition, as the events of 2020 recede and the acuteness of the conflict weakens for a part of society, the fact of the Russian state's

²⁴ How Belarusians' views on the war have changed over six months, Chatham House, August 2021

Figure 3.1.
Attitudes towards international alliances



Source: Answers to the question "Which geopolitical alliance is it better for the Belarusian state to be in?"

support of the Belarusian regime is no longer an obstacle to making a pro-Russian choice.

Similar foreign policy orientations emerge in the particular discussion of supporting one of the sides in the Russia-Ukraine war: 41% of Belarusians refuse to take sides, 39% express support for Russia, and 20% for Ukraine. The pro-Russian position is held by most supporters of the incumbent authorities in Belarus (77%) and the audience of state media (60%). As for opponents of the authorities, Ukraine is supported by 66% of them, and by 44% of the audience of non-state media. In short, the segments with a pro-Russian potential are consolidated in supporting Russia, while the potentially pro-Ukrainian segments are likely to drift into neutrality.

The supporters of neutrality in foreign policy tend to be pro-European, but would support cooperating with all countries or staying out of any alliances for pragmatic reasons:

- If it is not possible to remain neutral, most of them would prefer to accede to the European Union and oppose joining the Russian Federation (Figure 3.2).
- The main declared reasons for staying neutral are the need to preserve sovereignty (49% of supporters of "no alliance" position) and willingness to cooperate with everyone (31% of supporters of

a simultaneous alliance with the EU and Russia). The next best reason given is the benefits of the position (34% of supporters of a simultaneous alliance with the EU and Russia).

For the most part, the neutrality-prone segments do not consider the influence of Western culture as negative (Figure 3.3), which further indicates that there is little spread of anti-European sentiment in Belarus.

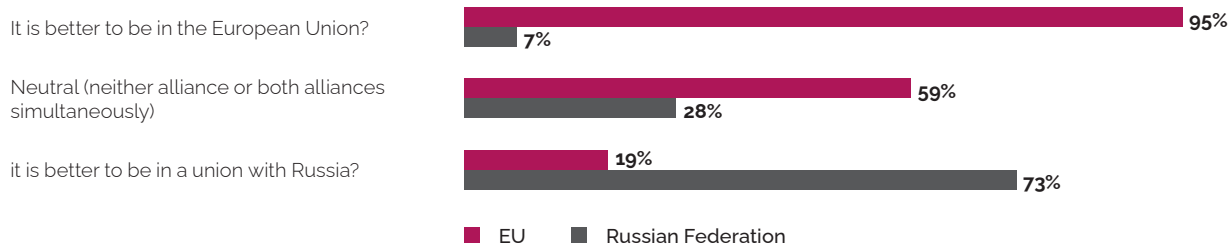
Neutrality is most popular among the **Emerging**, with up to half of the **Conscious** and the **Indifferent** also choosing this position.

The motivation of benefits, characteristic of supporters of neutrality, is also typical of those who seek EU accession. As a rule, they explain their choice by opportunities for development (41%), improving living standards (16%), and political freedoms (13%). The **Conscious** segment is the most committed to the European choice, and its representatives are the most likely to consider themselves Europeans (Figure 1.17).

The pro-Russian position is clearly different from the pro-European and neutral positions and mainly builds on the ideas of one nation (27%) and shared history (10%). These attitudes are most widespread among the **Soviet** and the **Russified**, who are nostalgic for the Soviet Union and feel a connection with Russian identity (see Section 1.1).

Figure 3.2.

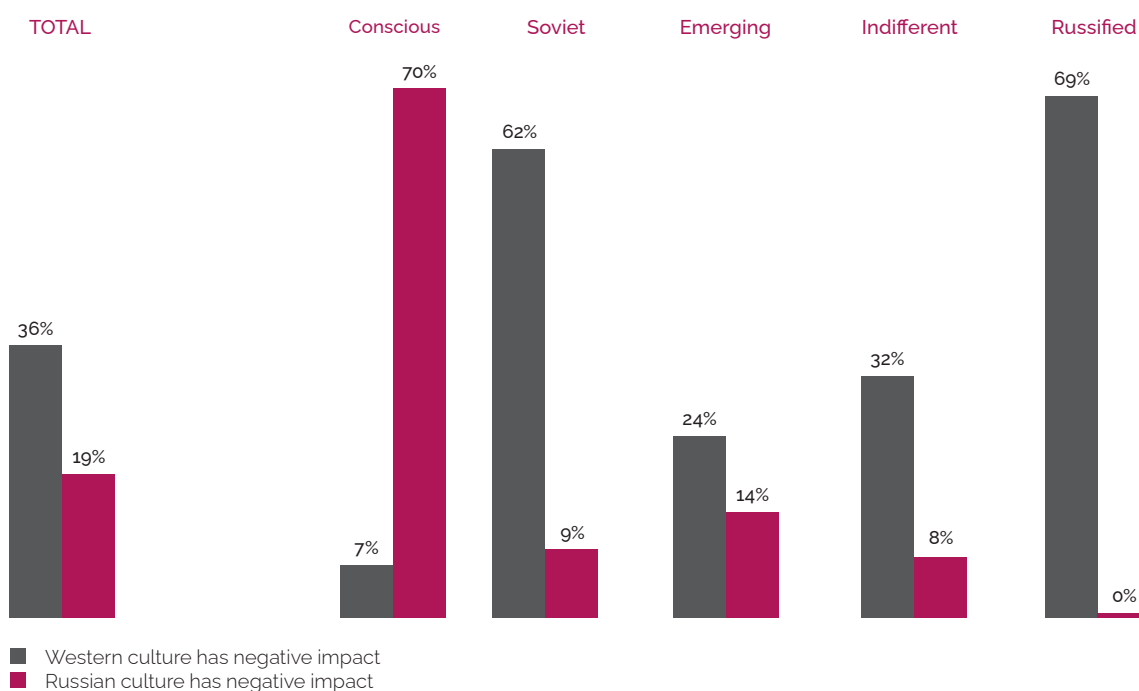
In a referendum, I would support joining the...



Source: Answers to the questions "Would you vote FOR or AGAINST accession of the Republic of Belarus to the European Union?" and "Would you vote FOR or AGAINST accession of the Republic of Belarus to the Russian Federation?"

Figure 3.3.

Assessing the impact of foreign culture on Belarusian life



Source: Answers to the questions "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement: "... culture has a negative impact on Belarusian life?"

Having analysed the Chatham House survey data, the sociologist Gennady Korshunau arrives at similar conclusions about the motivation for choosing a foreign policy vector. When selecting neutrality,²⁵ people are likely to be guided by security considerations, unwillingness to be involved in a conflict, or the prospects for economic

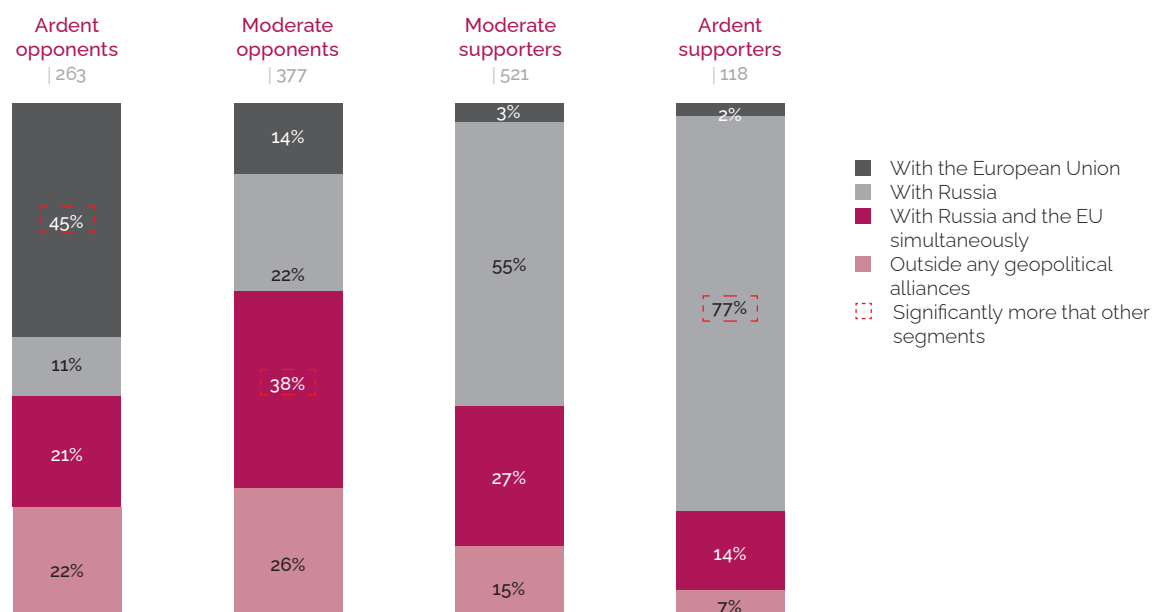
benefits. The European choice is mostly determined by opportunities for development and a commitment to humanistic values.²⁶ In other words, most Belarusians are still guided by pragmatic motives. Supporters of the Russian vector,²⁷ on the other hand, tend to speak of shared

²⁵ Коршунаў Г. Што рухае тымі, хто кажа, што Беларусь не патрэбныя ні Расія, ні Еўрапейскі саюз, а таксама чым кіруюцца тыя, каму патрэбна і тое, і другое // Што думаюць беларусы, 13.09.2022 / H. Korshunau, *What drives those who say that Belarus does not need either Russia or the European Union, and what drives those who need both* // *What Belarusians think*, 13 September 2022

²⁶ Коршунаў Г. Чаму беларусы выбіраюць Еўропу, а не Расію? Цэнтр новых ідэй, 14.06.2022 / H. Korshunau, *Why do Belarusians choose Europe and not Russia?* Centre for new ideas, 14 June 2022

²⁷ Коршунаў, Г. Чаму беларусы выбіраюць Расію, а не Еўропу? Цэнтр новых ідэй, 07.06.2022 / H. Korshunau, *Why do Belarusians choose Europe and not Russia?* Centre for new ideas, 7 June 2022

Figure 3.4.
Attitudes towards international alliances, by political position



Source: Answers to the question "Which geopolitical alliance is it better for the Belarusian state to be in?"

history and appeal to the identity of the Slavs and the triune nation.

Pragmatism traditionally prevails in the public assessment of Belarus's foreign policy. For example, 2013 research by the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies shows that at that time Belarusians explained their choice mainly with reference to economic benefits (73%).²⁸ Today, the set of pragmatic arguments adds the security motive — unwillingness to join one of the parties to the conflict. At the same time, support for the Russian vector has ceased to be a pragmatic choice and is motivated by traditionalist arguments.

The choice of orientation in international politics is also linked (Figure 3.4) to the political position vis-à-vis the incumbent authorities (see Section 2.1 for segmentation by political position). Opponents tend to either focus on ties to the EU or advocate neutrality, while supporters of the authorities are likely to choose an alliance with Russia. Moreover, the pro-Russian orientation is characteristic of ardent supporters, while moderates are divided into pro-Russian and neutrals.

3.2. ATTITUDES TO INTEGRATION WITH RUSSIA

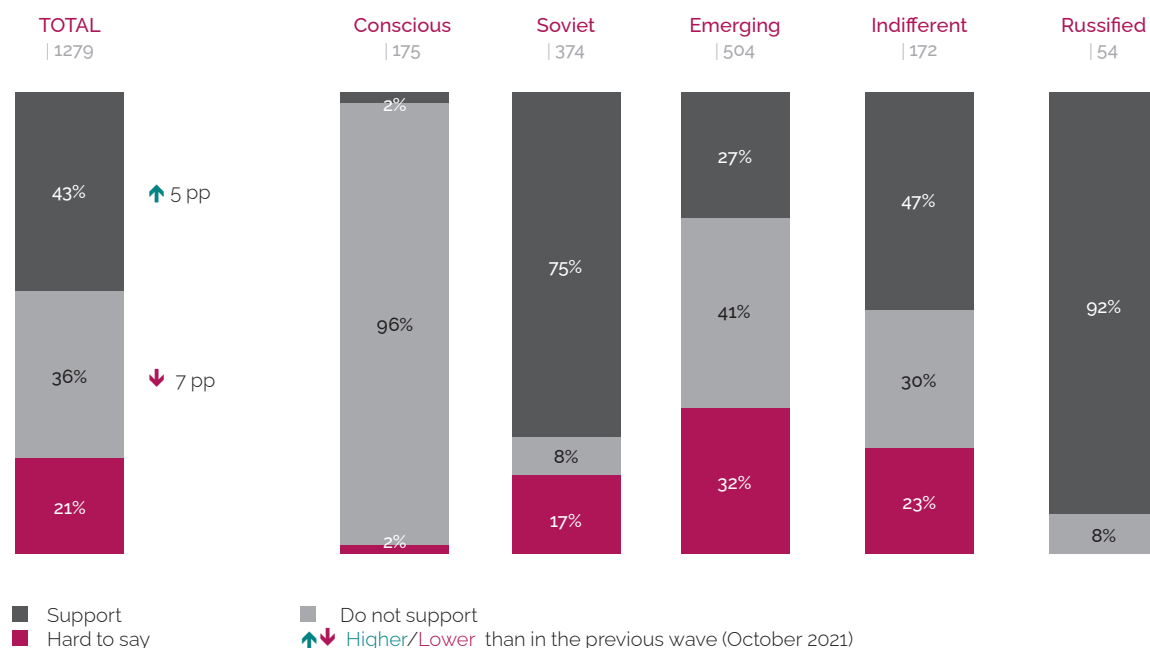
Compared to last year, support for integration with Russia has increased, and today the number in favour slightly exceeds opponents, although neither position has a clear majority (Figure 3.5). However, "integration" here does not constitute support for unification of the main state institutions, rather it means scientific and technological cooperation and a common visa area (Figure 3.6). The segments of the **Soviet** and the **Russified** form the support base for rapprochement with Russia.

48% of supporters of integration and 15% opponents largely believe that integration should imply scientific and technological cooperation, while 44% of supporters and 13% of opponents support the establishment of a common visa area (44% of supporters and 13% of opponents). Other areas of potential integration are unpopular even among supporters. There is low support for unification of the judicial systems (16% of supporters), law enforcement systems (21%), legislation in most spheres (12% in legislative, 16% in economic, 21% in marriage and family matters), or the creation of supranational authorities (20%).

Low support for the integration of state institutions is a continuation of a longstanding trend. According to studies of the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, most Belarusians in the early 2000s supported the creation of supranational governing bodies

²⁸ Мельянцов Д., Артеменко Е. Геополитические предпочтения белорусов: слишком прагматичная нация? Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies, 02.04.2013 2013 / D. Meliantsov, E. Artemenko, *Geopolitical preferences of the Belarusians: a too pragmatic nation? Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies*, 02 April 2013

Figure 3.5.
Attitude to integration with Russia



Source: Answers to the question 'How do you personally feel about the idea of integration of the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation?'

in the Union State, but by the beginning of 2010s they already preferred contacts with Russia as relations between two independent states.²⁹ By the end of the decade, this had become the majority opinion (62%).

Attitudes towards integration are related to attitudes towards nationality issues.

- The greatest support for integration can be seen among the **Soviet** and the **Russified**. Compared with other segments, they are more likely to advocate the creation of a unified armed forces (36% of the Soviet and 35% of the Russified) and the unification of the energy system (36% and 44%). The **Russified** are also notable for their active support of introducing the Russian ruble into Belarus (46%) and the possibility of obtaining Russian citizenship (46%).
- Almost no one among the **Conscious** supports deepening integration with Russia in any form.
- In this issue, the **Emerging** are closer to the position of the **Conscious** and have more opponents of integration than supporters. Even if supported, integration may be approved of in the sphere of scientific and technical cooperation (30%).

and a common visa area (24%), similarly to the findings for other segments.

- The **Indifferent** drift towards the **Soviet** and the **Russified** on this issue, with the number of integration supporters reaching 47%. The most popular form of integration among them is the introduction of common citizenship (38%).

Such differences are explained by the segments' national identity and their attitudes towards the incumbent authorities. For the **Conscious**, the preservation of national independence is essential and, in their opinion, integration endangers this. Instead, the **Soviet** and the **Russified** are more likely to perceive Belarusians and Russians as one nation or simply consider themselves Russians after all. At the same time, regime critics among the **Conscious** and the **Emerging** do not want to strengthen the regime's ties with Russia since the latter is giving the regime support.

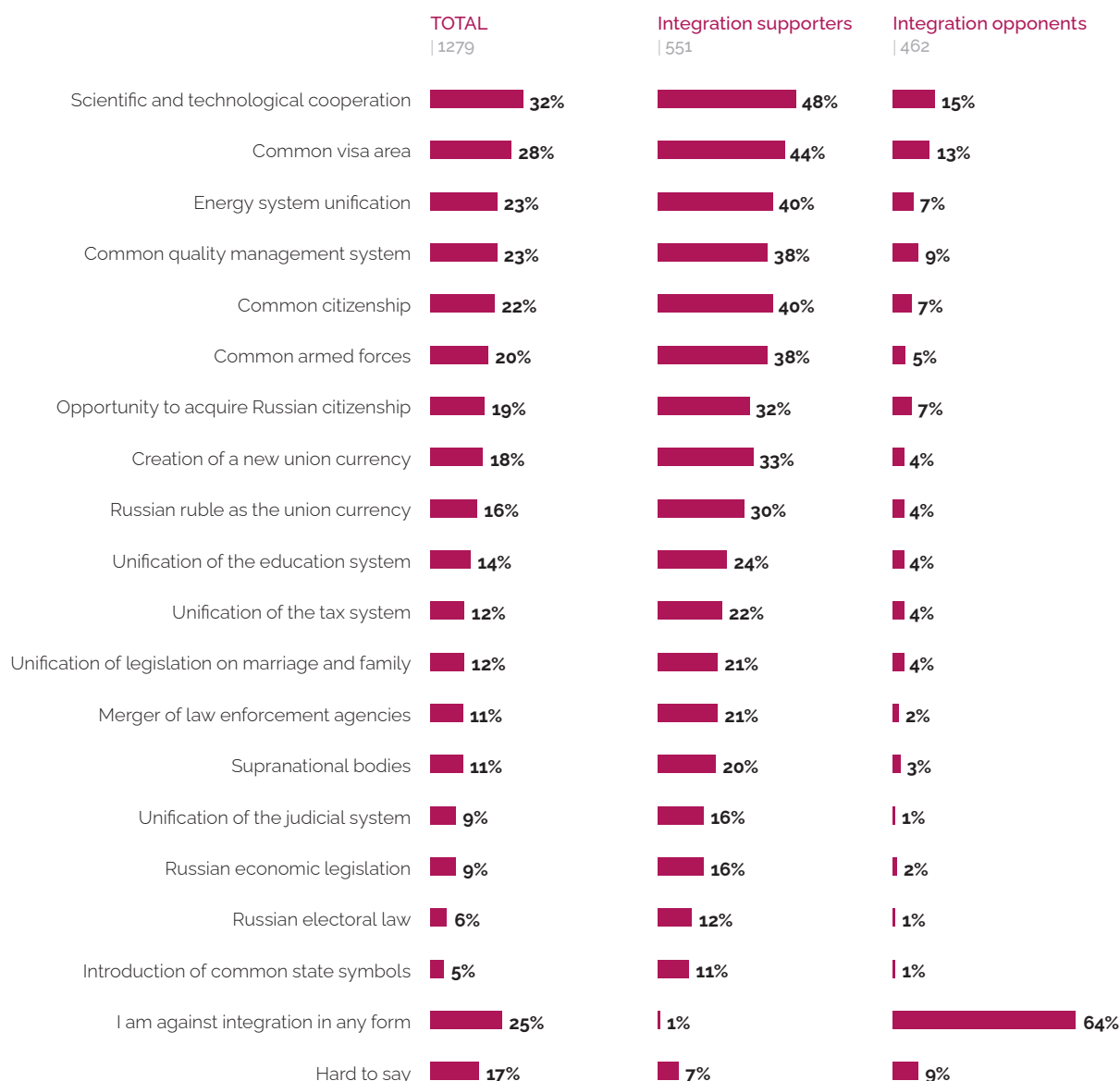
3.3. PERCEPTION OF OTHER COUNTRIES IN BELARUSIAN SOCIETY

Belarusians have a positive attitude to most countries in the so-called "West", as well as to Russia, China, and Venezuela. They have a positive image of Western European countries and Japan, seeing them as highly developed and comfortable. The attitude to Belarus's neighbouring EU states is less positive: Belarusians tend to consider these countries poor, and the

²⁹ Динамика оценок внешнеполитических векторов Беларуси, Институт социологии НАН Беларуси, 2020 / *Dynamics of assessments of Belarus' foreign policy vectors, Institute of Sociology, National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, 2020*

Figure 3.6.

Areas of possible deepening of integration



Source: Answers to the question "In the event of deeper integration of the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation, what should this integration comprise?"

segments that support the incumbent authorities view them as political enemies. The image of the United Kingdom, the United States, Russia, and China is as world leaders. China, while taking a neutral position in relation to the internal Belarusian crisis, is generally perceived very positively, whereas Belarusians are divided in their opinions about Russia and the US.

3.3.1. Attitude to other countries

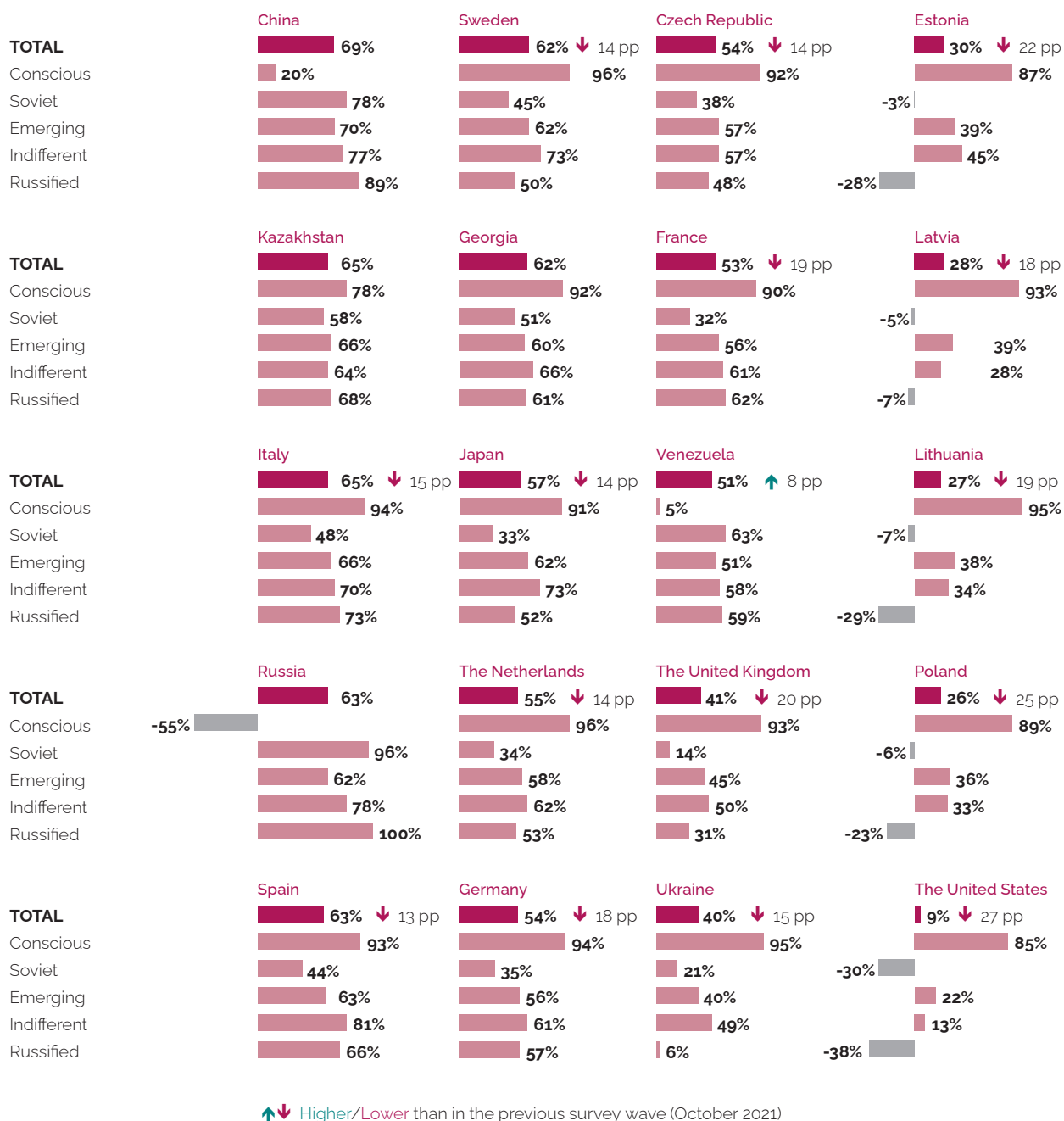
Overall, Belarusians have a positive attitude towards other countries. Positive perceptions strongly prevail over negative ones, both in relation to most Western countries and, for example, to China and Russia (Figure 3.7).

At the same time, attitudes towards the neighbouring EU countries and the United States are noticeably worse, having deteriorated significantly over the past year. This is mainly due to the positions of the **Soviet** and the **Russified**, with their prevailing negative perception of these countries. The **Conscious** also differ from other segments by having an extremely positive attitude towards Western countries, and a markedly worse attitude towards China, Russia, and Venezuela.

The Belarusians' attitude to other countries is directly connected to their idea of how these countries' inhabitants treat Belarusians. In general, Belarusians believe

Figure 3.7.

Figure 3.7. Index of attitudes towards other countries



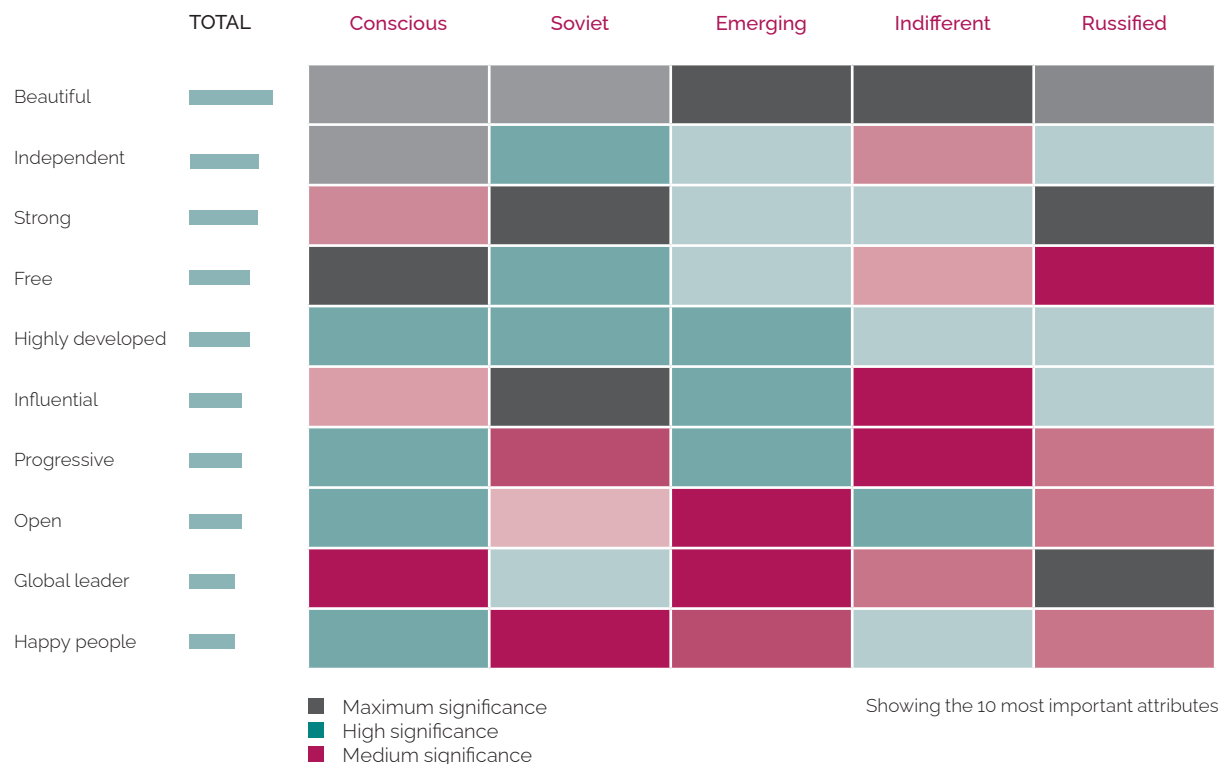
Source: Answers to the question 'How do you generally feel about ...?'

that residents of other countries treat them well. However, a pattern emerges: people are more likely to view other countries better than they think people in those countries treat them. This may be linked to the idea of the Belarusian state's negative image in international arena, particularly visible in the case of Ukraine. It is the only country from which Belarusians expect a negative attitude (attitude index: -7%). And these expectations are realistic: according to the Sociological Group "Rating" in

October 2022, as many as 85% of Ukrainians considered Belarus an enemy country.³⁰ As with the general assessment of international vector and integration, the differences in the segments' attitude to other countries are linked

³⁰ Вісімнадцате загальнонаціональне опитування: ставлення українців до іноземних країн, Соціологічна група «Рейтинг», октябрь 2022 / Eighteenth national survey: attitude of Ukrainians to foreign countries, Sociological group "Rating", October 2022

Figure 3.8.
Importance of image attributes, Jaccard Index (see Appendix 1)



to these countries' opinion about the internal Belarusian political conflict. The segments inclined to oppose the incumbent government have better attitudes towards those countries that support the democratic movement or remain neutral. Conversely, the segments dominated by government supporters are more likely to appreciate those countries that support the regime.

Different attitudes are related not only to political confrontation, but also to different perceptions of a country's image (Figure 3.8). All segments are likely to have a positive attitude towards a country if they consider it beautiful. At the same time, the **Conscious** focus on a country's freedom and independence, the **Soviet** prioritise a country's power and influence, while the **Russified** appreciate power and global leader status. For the **Emerging** and the **Indifferent**, a country's beauty comes first. For the methodology for calculating the relationship between perception and image attributes (Jaccard Index), see Appendix 1.

Negative attitudes across all segments are mostly associated with the image of an "aggressive" and "violent" country.

3.3.2. Link between media consumption and perception of other countries' image

Not only do the segments have different attitudes to image characteristics, but they also have different perceptions as

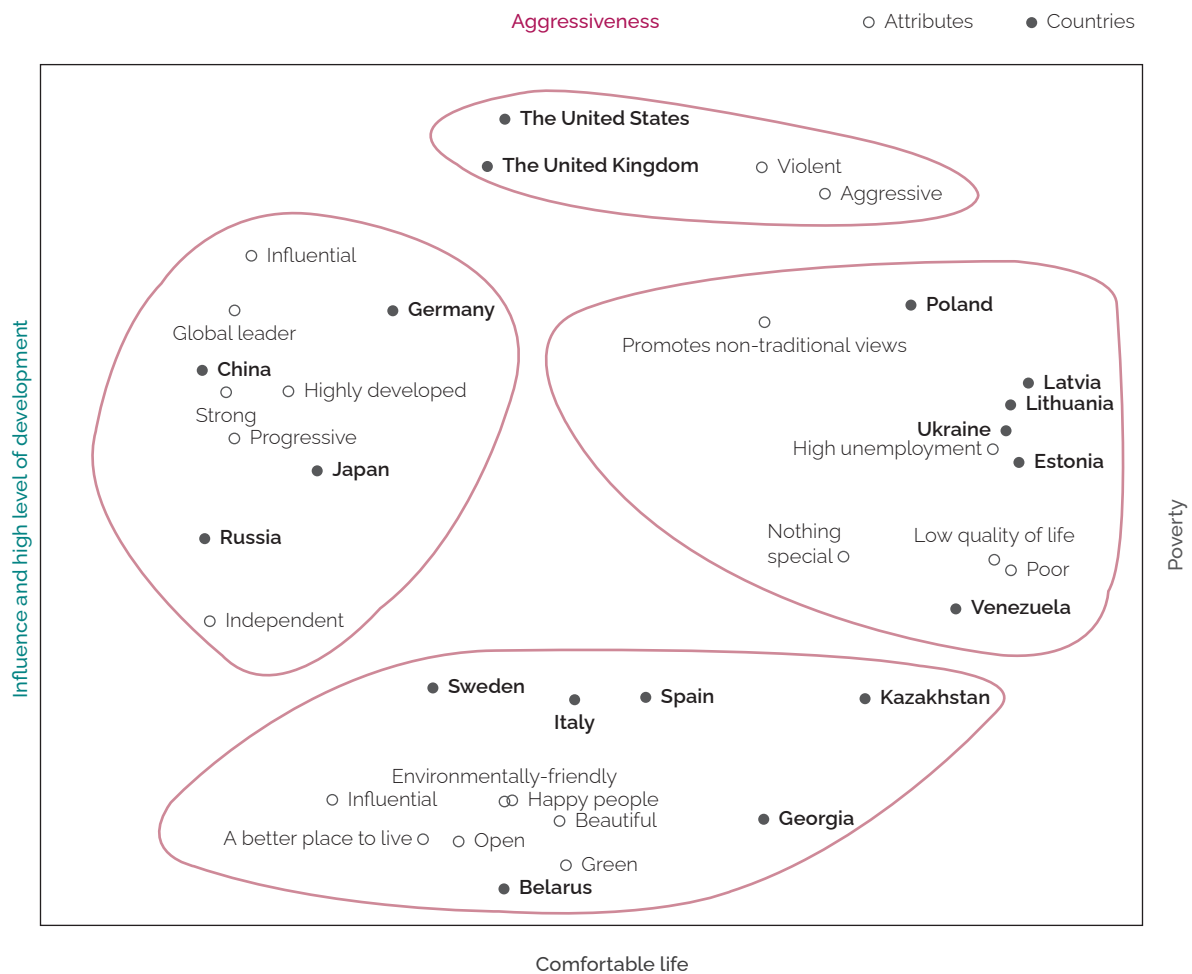
to which characteristics relate to a particular country. As a rule, the perception of the country's image is mediated through media consumption (see Appendix 3 for the methodology of audience segmentation by media consumption).

Segments with large shares of the audience of state media audience (the **Soviet**, the **Indifferent**, and the **Russified**) perceive four clusters of countries (Figure 3.9):

1. The US and the UK are notable for their aggressiveness and brutality.
2. Belarus's European neighbours and Venezuela are considered poor. The latter has the image of a comfortable country to live in, while Poland is seen as an aggressive country.
3. Sweden, Italy, Spain, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Belarus itself constitute a group of countries that are comfortable to live in. The latter two fall within countries with an image of being poor.
4. A country's influence and power are associated with its high level of development. The group of such countries include China, Germany, Japan and Russia.

As active consumers of state media, the **Soviet** and the **Russified** segments are positive about countries' power and influence, linking these characteristics to being highly developed. For them, these are Russia, China, Japan, and Germany, and this explains their good attitude towards these

Figure 3.9.
Image map of countries among the audience of state media



countries. The combination of Russia's positive image and political position explains the pro-Russian orientation of the **Soviet** and the **Russified**, coupled with nostalgia for the **Soviet** past and proximity to the **Russian** national identity. At the same time, they treat well some "faraway" EU countries, which they consider comfortable for living — just like Belarus, but are extremely negative towards their European neighbours, calling them poor and considering them political adversaries.

Since the **Conscious** are primarily consumers of non-state media (53%), their perceptions differ considerably from the above segments. Their perceptions distinguish three clusters of countries sharing similar images (Figure 3.10):

1. The United States, China and Russia are all perceived to be influential and aggressive. Moreover, the first two have the attributes of highly-developed nations and leaders, while Russia tends to be seen as poor and aggressive.
2. Countries including Venezuela, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus are perceived as poor. Their image is of

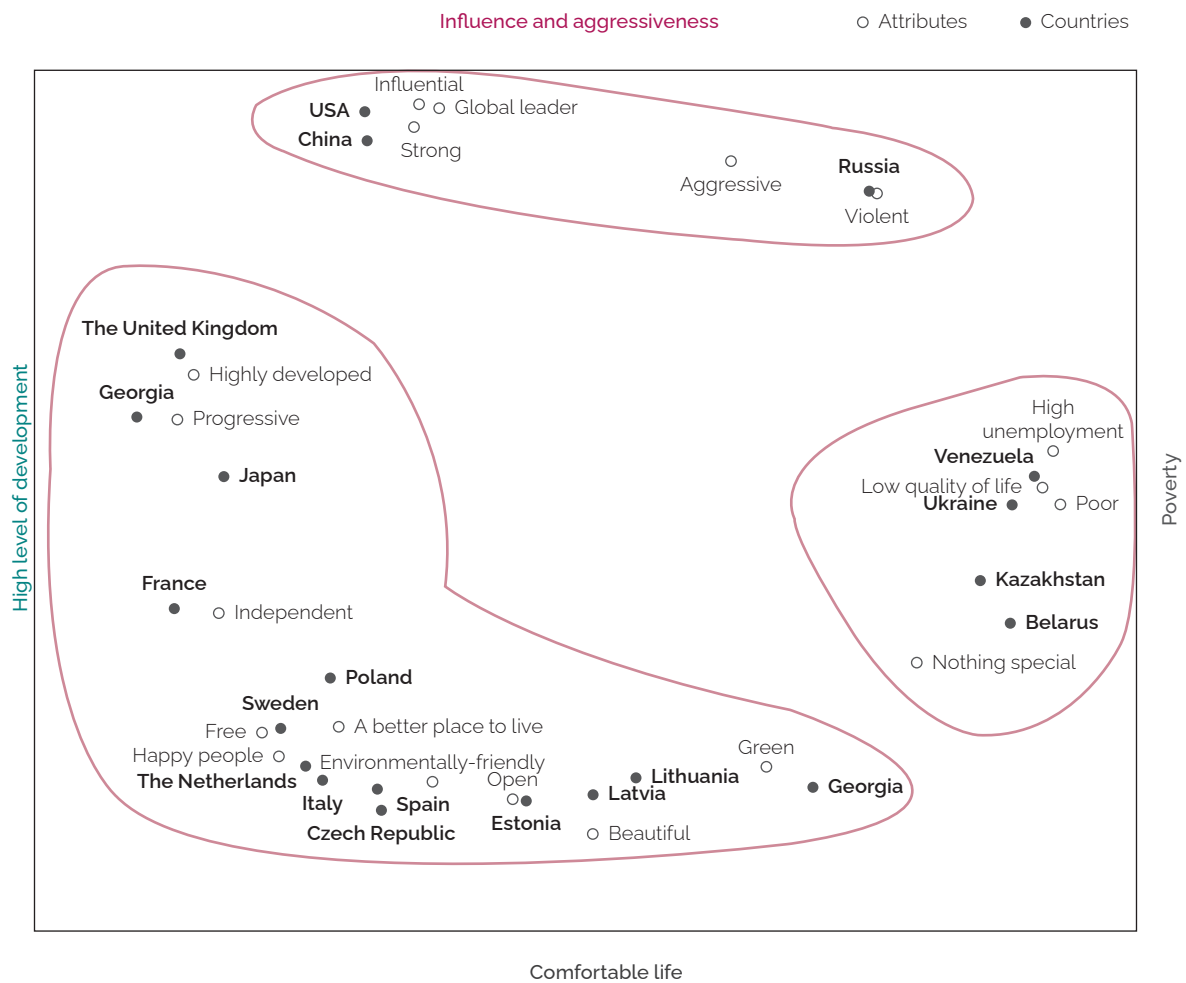
countries with low living standards and high unemployment.

3. The third group includes highly-developed and comfortable countries, namely the EU countries, the UK, Japan and Georgia. The latter may have the attributes of poverty, while the UK and Germany are seen as more influential.

It is the consumption of independent media by the **Conscious** that leads them to associate EU countries, the UK and Japan with such positive attributes as freedom, independence and comfortable living. This explains the segment's pro-European character. At the same time, the **Conscious** have a very bad attitude to Russia, whose main feature is aggression. Although the US has an image of the world leader, which is similar to that of China, the **Conscious** are much better disposed towards that country due to its democratic stance on the internal political crisis in Belarus.

The **Emerging** receive information equally from state (22%) and non-state (23%) media sources, with 32% of the segment

Figure 3.10.
Image map of countries among the audience of non-state media



counting as an audience of both types of media. This explains the segment's mixed perceptions in respect of other countries' images.

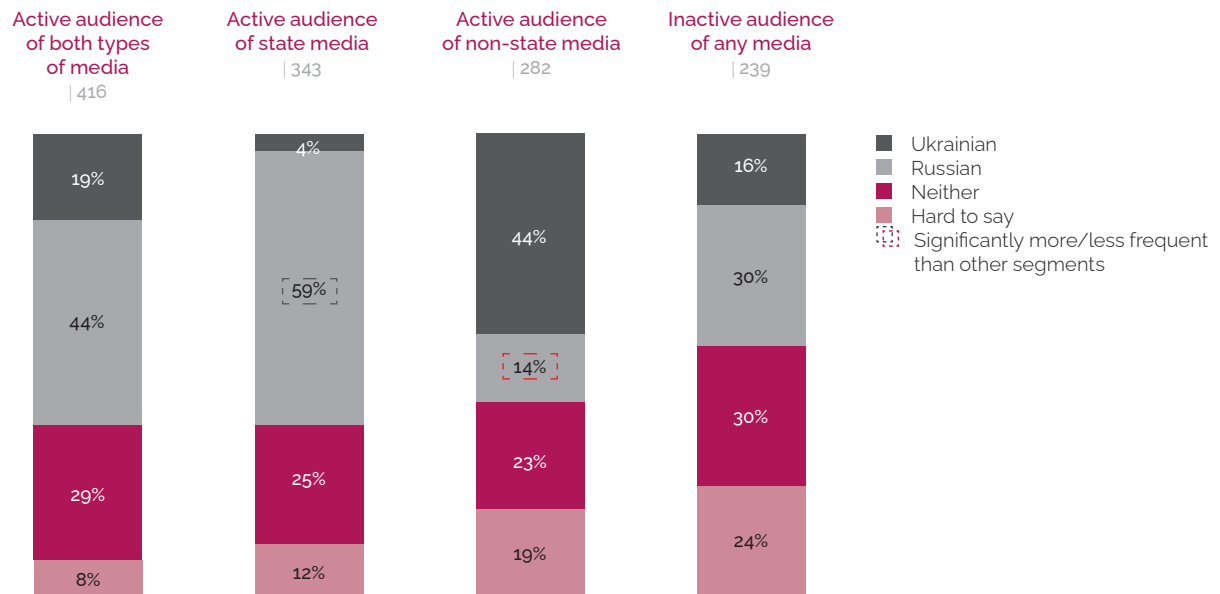
The **Emerging** — and also the **Indifferent** — are mostly neutral and positioned somewhere between the **Conscious**, on the one hand, and the **Soviet** and the **Russified**, on the other. This is due to the dominance of positive attitudes towards all countries without exception. And although the declarative position of both segments is somewhat neutral, the **Emerging**, who consume information from both independent and state sources, perceive the image of different countries similarly to the **Conscious**, choosing Europe if neutrality is not an option. The **Indifferent**, with its increased share of audience of state media, are closer to the **Soviet** and the **Russified** in their perception of the image of countries and the general assessment of international politics orientation.

Furthermore, the use of different types of media also determines the support for a particular side in the current

military conflict (Figure 3.11). State media audiences are the main anchor for the Russian side, which can be explained by the abundance of anti-Ukrainian narratives in Belarusian propaganda. The content analysis conducted by Media IQ in September-October 2022 confirms that the Russia-Ukraine conflict remains the main topic of pro-governmental Telegram channels.³¹ These media's key messages ("The West is provoking a global food crisis", "Ukraine has caused war", "The US is using Ukraine to destroy Europe", "Ukrainians are Nazis", "Russian troops are advancing and succeeding"), as well as their perception of Russia as influential, progressive and independent and Ukraine as a poor and uncomfortable place to live, determine that an extremely low share support the Ukrainian side in the conflict across all segments, except for the audience of non-state media (support for Ukraine there reaches 44%).

³¹ Хит-парад антиукраинских нарративов белорусской пропаганды, Media IQ, октябрь 2022 / Hit parade of anti-Ukrainian narratives of Belarusian propaganda / Media IQ, October 2022

Figure 3.11.
Side supported in the Russia-Ukraine war, by media consumption



Source: Answers to the question "In the current situation between Russia and Ukraine, which side do you support?"

CONCLUSIONS

In Belarus, there exist two major national identity projects — the Belarusian national-romantic project and the Soviet project. The views inherent in these projects are embodied in the core groups in Belarusian urban society — the Conscious and the Soviet segments. The Belarusian national-romantic project assumes love for the Belarusian language, awareness of the Belarusian people as a separate nation, and rejection of the idea of “triunity”. This project is Europe-oriented.

The Soviet national project builds on people's nostalgia for the Soviet Union, an idealised image of the values and views of those years. The Soviet project is friendly towards the Belarusian language and culture in particular and towards Belarus in general.

Apart from the two dominating projects, there exists a modern Russian national project, whose advocates and carriers are represented by the Russified segment. Members of this segment do not like the Belarusian language, support the integration of Russia and Belarus, do not believe in the strengthening of the Belarusians' national consciousness and are afraid of nationalism. These people tend to deny the independence of the Belarusian nation, viewing it as an extension of the triune Slavic family.

Quite a large part of society does not make a clear choice between these three projects. Thus, there is a segment of the Indifferent characterised by indifference towards nationality issues. The national as a link to one of the three above-mentioned projects is not important for their identity. The examples of national indifference described in the literature suggest the localisation of groups of Indifferents territorially and some form of public manifestation of such indifference (for example, “tutejsi” in Poland between the world wars, or the population of Upper Silesia in the 1920s). These phenomena are not observed in Belarus, although the segment of the Indifferent often associates itself with its town or village rather than the country as a whole. One can assume that this happens due to the atomisation in Belarus as a post-socialist society, as well as due to the repressive nature of the Belarusian state apparatus — in principle, the Indifferent do not have much space for choice in terms of identity. However, they do not put much sense into the identification of a “Belarusian”; for them it is merely a geographical fact and a formally “documented” identity.

A considerable part of society somehow remains between two main national projects — it is a segment labelled the Emerging. Its members do not lean towards any national project, nor they adhere to any particular position, but they

do not have the indifference typical for the Indifferent segment. Also, following the government's narrative, these people attach low importance to the values commonly interpreted as civic-democratic. This means that a significant part of Belarusian society is at an identity crossroads.

The national projects are strongly connected with the current socio-political conflict in society. The Conscious form the core of the regime's ardent opponents, while the Soviet constitute the bulk of its supporters, both moderate and ardent. This is easily explained by the fact that the state's discourse now completely excludes those oriented to the Belarusian national-romantic project, declaring them enemies and their values hostile and unacceptable. One can assume that this exclusion and ensuing experiences and concerns are well felt by the Emerging, who make up half of moderate opponents. Furthermore, the conflict also has a value nature, as supporters of the romantic project are less likely to have rigid thinking, to explain events by the intervention of supernatural forces, and to accept state violence. Instead, they appreciate the importance of civic and democratic values.

This intertwining of the national and the political exacerbates the isolation of the Conscious (and also ardent opponents), who confine themselves to their media bubble and social circles or seek to flee the country. These segments feel increasingly less connected with the Belarusian state (they rarely refer to themselves as citizens of Belarus) and presumably feel closer ties with the post-2020 Belarusian diaspora than with the bearers of other national projects living in Belarus.

Unlike other segments, the Conscious also have a better feeling of problems in the country, highly appreciating civil values; they seek the transformation of the country and restructuring of the system. The root of the social conflict for them lies with carriers of the other, state-promoted national project who do not want this transformation. It is important to understand that this is not a reactionary position or fear of change — it is just that this segment likes Belarus as it is.

Despite their opposite views, the Conscious and the Soviet are united by patriotism (or love for Belarus). At the same time, “patriotism” for them means different things:

- For the Conscious, patriotism emphasises non-material components of nationality (language, culture) that are not tied to geography. In addition,

they correlate patriotism with an orientation towards Europe and, disagreeing with current government actions, see it as their duty to change government policies.

- The Soviets, on the other hand, associate patriotism with their Soviet and, to some extent, pro-Russian values. Despite their belief in the development of the national, they generally support the current state policy and the orientation towards Russia — a big and strong country, their “brothers” from Soviet times.

Foreign policy preferences stem from the adherence to a particular national identity project.

Accordingly, the pro-European vector is endorsed by the Conscious, and the pro-Russian one by the Soviet and the Russified. The protest-oriented segments are often pro-European and have positive feelings about Russia, while the pro-Russian segments often support union with Russia and view the US and the closest EU neighbours negatively.

The pro-Russian vector is more pronounced than the pro-European one, attracting significant support from among the Emerging and the Indifferent. Over the past year, support for the pro-Russian vector has increased by 10% at the expense of a decreasing share of those who are neutral on foreign policy orientation. This could have resulted from the war, which forced the moderately pro-Russian individuals to specify their position and consolidate, as well as from intensified pro-Russian propaganda in the state media.

At the same time, the choice in favour of Russia is hardly conditioned by rational factors, but rather sewn into the discourse of the Soviet (and modern Russian) narrative, which presents Belarus and Russia as brotherly countries and Belarusians and Russians as brotherly peoples. Quite illustrative is the story of Belarusians supporting the integration with Russia: despite the significant number of integration supporters, there is still no decisive support for the merger of the states and no clear understanding of what integration can consist in.

Despite the obvious connection between foreign policy preferences and national projects, most Belarusians support neutrality and have no desire of actively calling for any foreign policy choices.

Pragmatism is an important motivation of Belarusians' foreign policy orientations. Despite being rather pro-European, the supporters of neutrality choose this course, not wanting to join a particular party to the conflict, either for security reasons or seeking to benefit from cooperation with both sides. The pro-European core associates the benefits and opportunities for development with EU membership.

So, the Conscious, who support the Western vector in foreign policy, see Belarus's future as a part of the European

Union as an independent country with a developed local Belarusian identity. They associate this choice with development opportunities and a high standard of living.

Instead, the Russified and the Soviets adhere to a Russian\Soviet colonial project of national identity. They nonetheless see Belarus as an independent country, but one in an alliance with Russia. While not associating themselves completely with any of the existing national projects, the Emerging and the Indifferent tend to adhere to neutral positions as a pragmatic choice.

All of the above leads us to the conclusion that there is a truly deep value and identity split in Belarusian society. Considering the Belarusian regime's orientation and foreign policy dynamics, this split will only deepen. The direct conflict between the bearers of the Belarusian romantic-national project and the repressive state machine raises important questions for researchers and politicians:

1. How do the bearers of each national project manifest their national identity in everyday life?
2. How can (and should) the Emerging and the Indifferent be included in the national projects?
3. Given the media and social “closeness” of the Conscious, how can the split in society be addressed?
4. How can a future government ensure the involvement of representatives of the Soviet national project in a new political system after a transformation of the Belarusian regime?

At the moment, these questions remain unanswered, but the answers that emerge will determine Belarus's image in the not-too-distant future.

APPENDICES

1. JACCARD INDEX: METHODOLOGY

The Jaccard Index shows how important or unimportant image attributes are to respondents, while avoiding asking direct questions. To obtain results, the researchers analyse the statistical relationship between a positive attitude towards a country and the attributes respondents associate with that country.

Each response generates a response matrix like this one:

Attributes	Country					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Beautiful	✓	✓	✓			
Strong	✓	✓			✓	
Highly Developed	✓	✓	✓			
Free	✓			✓	✓	✓

This matrix is used to calculate index:

Does the respondent have a good attitude to the country?	Does the respondent associate this attribute with the country	
	Yes	No
	Yes	No
	A	B
	C	D

$$\text{Jaccard Index} = A / (A+B+C) \times 100$$

This shows the index value for each attribute for each respondent. Then their arithmetic mean is then calculated for all respondents.

As a result, the researchers obtain:

- A ranked list of attributes — the higher the index value, the stronger the association with a good attitude;
- An understanding of which attributes are most and least important in forming a positive attitude towards a country.

2. INTERPRETATION OF IMAGE MAPS

Image maps are used to identify attributes that set countries apart from others. The coordinates of the points are calculated using correspondence analysis.

- The attributes characteristic of a country are placed next to it on the map.
- "Characteristic attributes" are those that are often correlated with a given country rather than with others and which are more often attributed to that country than other characteristics.
- Attributes that are not characteristic of any country, as well as countries without a characteristic image are placed in the centre of the map.
- The countries that are located next to each other, and their characteristic attributes, form the so-called image groups — a group of countries distinguished by sharing the same characteristics.

For example:



- The drawing shows that the attributes of high level of development and influence are far from the centre, and hence these are distinctive attributes.
- The US and China are close to the attributes of high level of development, but they are rather distinguished by influence. On the other hand, the UK and Germany are distinguished by the image of being highly developed.

3. SEGMENTATION BY MEDIA CONSUMPTION

Audience of non-state media	Audience of state media	
	Yes	No
	Yes	No
	No	No
	Active audience of both types of media	Active audience of non-state media
	32%	22%
	Active audience of state media	Inactive audience of any media
	27%	19%

The active audience of state / non-state media includes respondents who consume information from state / non-state channels every or almost every day on any of the platforms: television, internet portals, Telegram, YouTube and other social media.

- Examples of state media: TV channels — ONT, RTR-Planeta; online portals — Belta, Interfax; Telegram channels — Zheltyie Slivy, Pul Pervogo; ATN channel; Belarus and World News.
- Examples of non-state media: Belsat TV channel; online portals — Zerkalo and Onliner; Nexta, Nasha Niva telegram and youtube channels; Country for Life, Chalyi Live.

4. INTERPRETATION OF FACTOR ANALYSIS

Factor analysis is used to combine a set of individual variables into several fundamental factors.

According to the mathematical procedure:

- a factor combines strongly interrelated variables;
- variables from different factors, on the other hand, are hardly interrelated.

BELARUSIAN	RUSSIAN-SOVIET
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I wish we had more Belarusian language on TV and radio ○ I would like more Belarusian language in our lives ○ I think there should be more courses in Belarusian in our educational institutions ○ I would switch to the Belarusian language if more people around me spoke Belarusian ○ Many problems in our country are due to the fact that we have forgotten our culture and language ○ I think that the Belarusian language is beautiful ○ I would be willing to pay more taxes if these funds were spent on the development of the Belarusian national culture ○ I think that strengthening of the Belarusian people's national identity is possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If I had to choose between emigrating to Russia or Western Europe, I would choose Russia ○ We should not get rid of the Soviet legacy ○ I am equally enthusiastic about the successes of Belarusians and Russians ○ The breakup of the Soviet Union was a major tragedy ○ It would be good if Belarus finally united with Russia ○ Ukrainians are themselves to blame for what had happened in the Donbass ○ There is no infringement of the Belarusian language ○ I don't see any difference between

For example, certain respondents tend to agree with these two statements: "I wish we had more Belarusian language on TV and radio" and "I would like more Belarusian language in our lives".

Other respondents were more likely to agree with the other two statements: "If I had to choose between emigrating to Russia or Western Europe, I would choose Russia" and "We should not get rid of the Soviet legacy".

Consequently, there are two factors behind their answers: interest in Belarusian in the first case, and interest in Russian-Soviet national project in the second.

5. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC OF THE SAMPLE

Gender	Male	47%
	Female	53%
Age	18-24	7%
	25-34	31%
	35-44	21%
	45+	41%
Region	Brest region	13%
	Vitebsk region	10%
	Gomel region	12%
	Grodno region	11%
	Minsk	31%
	Minsk region	11%
	Mogilev region	13%
Settlement size	Minsk	31%
	100,000 +	53%
	20,000 – 100,000	16%
Education level	Secondary	22%
	Secondary special, professional	46%
	Incomplete higher	3%
	Higher, postgraduate studies, academic degree	29%
Education profile	Legal	5%
	Economic	26%
	Natural sciences	5%
	Medical	4%
	Engineering and technical	34%
	Social sciences	10%

Education level	Humanitarian	12%
	Other (respondent is asked to specify)	3%
Employment	Full-time employment	3%
	Part-time employment	13%
	Self-employed	5%
	Parental leave	1%
	Retirement	7%
	Student	2%
	Other (respondent is asked to specify)	8%
Type of occupation (among employed)	Manager, director	3%
	Specialist, clerk	13%
	Skilled worker, driver, construction worker	5%
	Unskilled worker	1%
	Service worker	7%
	Entrepreneur	2%
	Other (respondent is asked to specify)	8%
	Total (employed)	952
Area of activity	Agriculture, forestry, fishery	3%
	Construction	13%
	Trade, repairs	5%
	Hotels and restaurants	1%
	Transport and communication	7%
	Finance, real estate operations	2%
	Education	8%
	Health and social services	6%
	Utility services	2%
	Public service (state bodies, administrations, etc.)	2%
	Security and law enforcement sector	2%
	Industry	16%
	Services (banks, insurance, hair-dressing, etc.)	7%
	IT sector, computer services	5%
	Commerce	13%
	Other (respondent is asked to specify)	9%

Marital status	Unmarried, live with parents / other family members	13%
	Unmarried, live separately	8%
	Married, live together, common-law marriage	62%
	Divorced / live separately	14%
	Widower / widow	3%
Number of children	None	54%
	One	27%
	Two	13%
	Three	5%
	Four	1%
	Five and more	0%
Household income per person	Below average (344 BYN and less)	27%
	Average (345–672 BYN)	33%
	Above average (673 BYN and more)	16%
	No answer	24%

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BELARUSIAN IDENTITY IN 2022: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY



Belarusian identity is at a crossroads with socio-political conflict and contestation over values strongly influencing society's national projects.



Foreign policy preferences stem from attachment to a one of several national identity projects. Despite this Belarusians show a strong commitment to neutrality.



The nature of the Belarusian regime and its foreign policy orientation will deepen divisions within society. The ways Belarus overcomes these divisions will shape the country's future image.