

The logo for ZOiS, consisting of the letters 'ZOiS' in a bold, red, sans-serif font. The 'i' is lowercase and has a dot. The background of the entire page is a photograph of birch tree trunks, with a large red triangle in the bottom right corner.

Zentrum für Osteuropa-
und internationale Studien
*Centre for East European
and International Studies*

No.3 · November 2017

ZOIS REPORT

**TERRA INCOGNITA –
THE PUBLIC MOOD IN CRIMEA**

Gwendolyn Sasse

Content

02	Executive Summary
03	Introduction
04	Limited external linkages
08	Citizenship and identity
13	Everyday life in Crimea
15	Interethnic relations
16	Assessment of the developments since 2014
20	Conclusion
21	Imprint

Executive Summary

Since the incorporation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol as subjects of the Russian Federation in March 2014 Crimea has, by and large, become terra incognita. The ZOiS survey conducted in Crimea (March-May 2017) provides a rare glimpse into the public mood in the region after its annexation by Russia. The main findings are:

- The Crimean population has been effectively cut off from Ukraine in terms of personal travel (only 12 percent travelled to other parts of Ukraine since 2014) and accessing the mass media. Contact with relatives in other parts of Ukraine has decreased significantly.
- The Crimean population is inwardly-oriented: over the last three years only 22 percent have travelled to Russia and three percent to other countries.
- There is a significant population exodus from the region. Twenty-one percent of the respondents have family members/friends who left Crimea since 2014, and 10 percent are contemplating leaving Crimea. Moscow and other parts of Russia are by far the most preferred migration destinations.
- Living in an EU country or the prospect of Ukraine joining the EU one day holds little attraction for Crimeans.
- The developments since 2014 have further strengthened regional identity, captured by the term krymchanin (Crimean), compared to other categories, such as ‘Russian’.
- About half of the respondents admit to having been taken by surprise by the Russian actions in 2014.
- The Crimean population, including the Crimean Tatars, agree that Ukrainian governments neglected the region over many years, with roughly a third of the respondents pointing to this as the main cause of the developments of 2014.

- The vast majority of the Crimean population would vote for the status quo in a future repeat referendum on Crimea’s status and express trust in Russian state institutions.
- The Crimean Tatars remain much more sceptical of the current regime.
- The majority of the respondents record an increase in price levels in Crimea as one of the everyday life consequences of the incorporation of Crimea into the Russian Federation.
- The Crimean population exhibits high levels of distrust in the regional and local political institutions.

Introduction¹

Since the Russian intervention in Crimea in March 2014 access to the peninsula has been restricted. Foreign journalists travelling to Crimea via Russia, the only possible entry point, risk not being allowed into Ukraine afterwards. Anecdotal evidence by Ukrainians visiting relatives in Crimea via the highly securitized land route, and reports by Ukrainian sociologists, Crimean Tatar and human rights organizations and individual Crimean Tatars, suggest that the region is de facto cut off from Ukraine, and that there is continued general public support for Russia despite harder living conditions and a repressive regime (for the Crimean Tatars in particular).

The annexation of Crimea gave rise to the first Western sanctions on Russia. The issue of Crimea has been sidelined both by the war in the Donbas region and an ambivalent mindset in the West that condemns the annexation as a breach of international law but simultaneously upholds the narrative that Crimea historically belongs to Russia. The latter represents a simplified reading of the region’s history that glosses over the fact that the peninsula was under Crimean Tatar rule for centuries before Catherine the Great annexed it in 1783, that the Crimean Tatars were deported under Stalin at the end of World War II, and that in the period from 1954–1991 Crimea was part of the Ukrainian SSR.

There is an undercurrent in the public discourse in Germany and the West more generally that interprets the annexation in 2014 as a question of self-determination. There is a notion that the Russian intervention was a response to a popular mobilization in Crimea in favour of joining Russia. However, in 2014 there was no popular mobilization in Crimea, the region was integrated into the Ukrainian state and formed part of the support base for the political regime of then Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich whose electoral support base was the south-east of the country.

¹ The research support by Alice Lackner is gratefully acknowledged, in particular with regard to the visualization of the data.

Crimea had seen a serious period of separatist mobilization in the mid-1990s after the collapse of the USSR. This movement, however, was not actively endorsed by the Russian regime under President Boris Yeltsin, as he prioritized good relations with Ukraine and the West. Yeltsin was averse to unpicking the territorial settlement that he himself had helped to engineer following the collapse of the USSR. This period of separatist tension resulted in a constitutionally guaranteed autonomy status for Crimea, though its competences were weak and vaguely defined. From 1998 onwards there was no further significant separatist mobilization in Crimea.

ZOiS conducted a survey in Crimea and Sevastopol between 26 March and 3 May 2017.² The survey was conducted through individual face-to-face interviews. It is based on a representative sample of 1,800 urban and rural Crimean residents aged 18 and older. A booster sample of 200 Crimean Tatars was added to ensure that a sufficient number of Crimean Tatars were included in the sample.

Limited external linkages

The survey reveals that there has been a comprehensive re-orientation of the social and political linkages of the Crimean population since 2014. The annexation by Russia effectively cut the link to the rest of Ukraine. Ninety-three percent of the survey respondents acknowledged that travelling to other parts of Ukraine has become more difficult. ► **FIGURE 1** This has a direct bearing on family networks: 44 percent of the respondents stated that they have less contact now with family members based in other parts of Ukraine. The question asked for general contact rather than actual visits, so it captures a bigger impact on the personal connections than mere physical travel restrictions. By comparison, 41 percent said that they maintain the same frequency of contact than before 2014. Only 7 percent of the respondents indicated that they have no relatives in other parts of Ukraine. ► **FIGURE 2** This figure underlines how big the impact has been on the many family connections between Crimea and the rest of Ukraine.

A vast majority of 88 percent said that they had not visited other regions or cities in Ukraine during the last three years.³ ► **FIGURE 3** The respondents describe a new post-2014 reality of broken ties, but they do not feel comfortable with the current situation. A clear majority of 70 percent ‘fully agrees’ and a further 19 percent ‘rather agree’ with the statement that the current border between Crimea and Kherson, the region bordering the peninsula to the north, should be open and easy to cross in both directions. ► **FIGURE 4**

The questions about travelling to Russia show an only somewhat more mobile Crimean population. While 58 percent said that travelling to other parts

2 The minimal response rate (AAPOR standards) for the whole of Crimea was 48 percent. The lowest response rate was encountered among the Crimean Tatars.

3 This question was answered by almost all the respondents in the survey, thereby indicating that the question about contacts to family members elsewhere in Ukraine was deemed more sensitive. This does not invalidate the results above but rather gives the answers more emphasis, as opting out of the question seems to have been an easier option in the interview situation.

FIGURE 1
Trips to other parts of Ukraine have become...

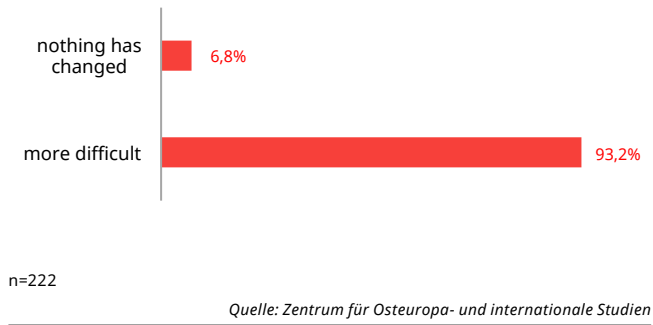


FIGURE 2
How often are you in touch with your relatives in Ukraine?

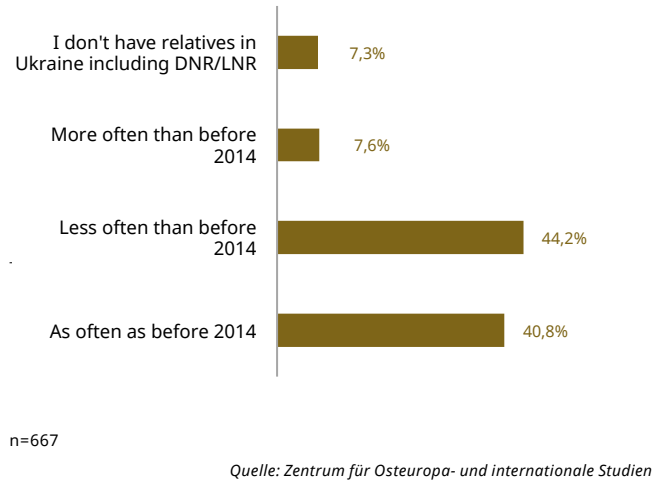


FIGURE 3
Have you visited any regions or cities in Ukraine over the past three years?

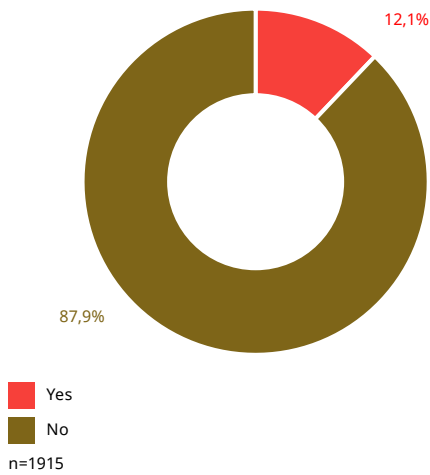


FIGURE 4
'Crimeans and residents of Ukraine should be able to cross the border Crimea-Kherson region easily in both directions.'

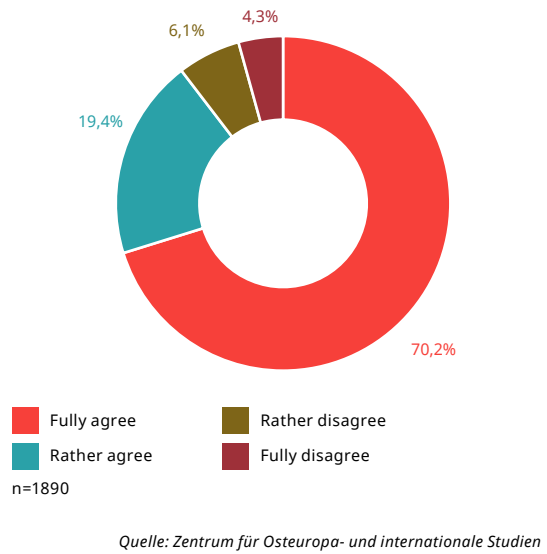


FIGURE 5
'Trips to other parts of Russia have become...'

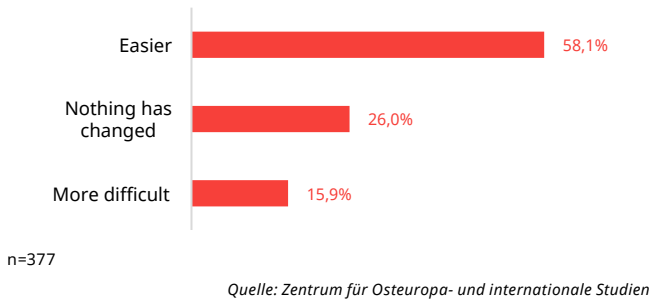


FIGURE 7
In the past 1-3 years, have you lived or worked 6 months or longer in...

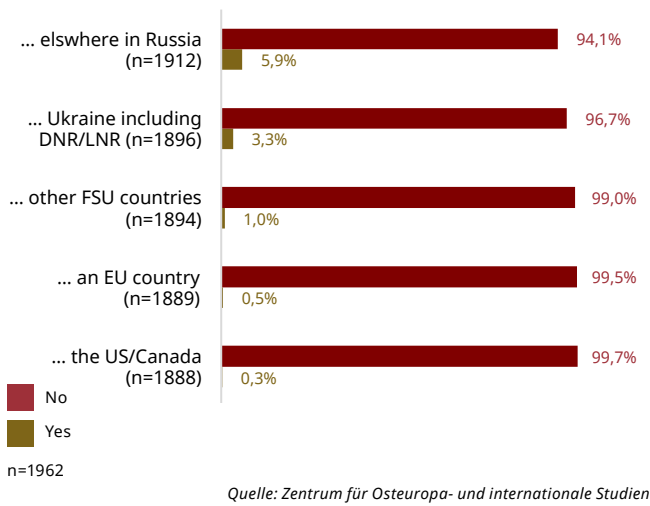


FIGURE 9
How often do you receive money from family members, relatives or friends who live...

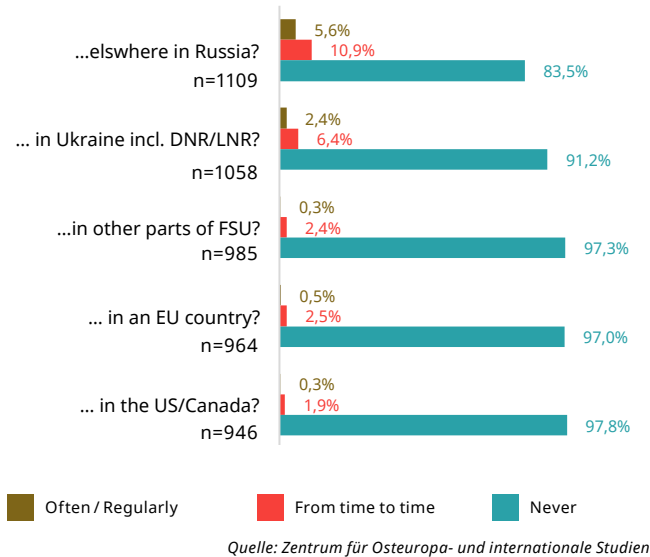


FIGURE 6
Have you visited any regions or cities in Russia over the past three years?

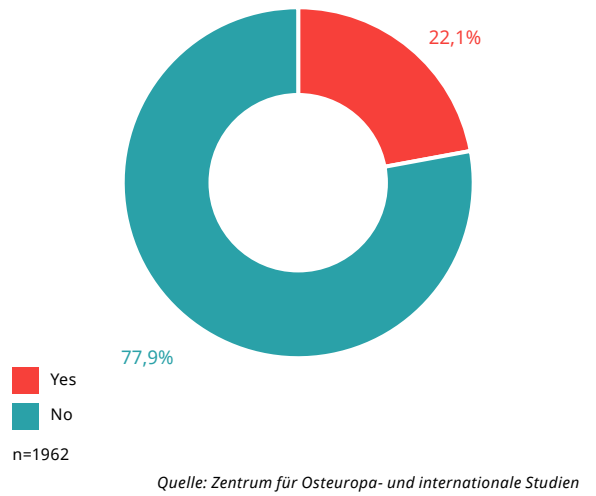


FIGURE 8
Have any of your family members / friends left Crimea in the last three years?

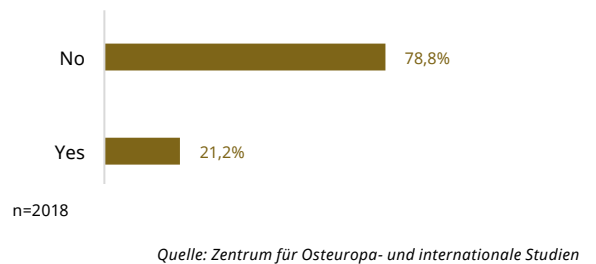
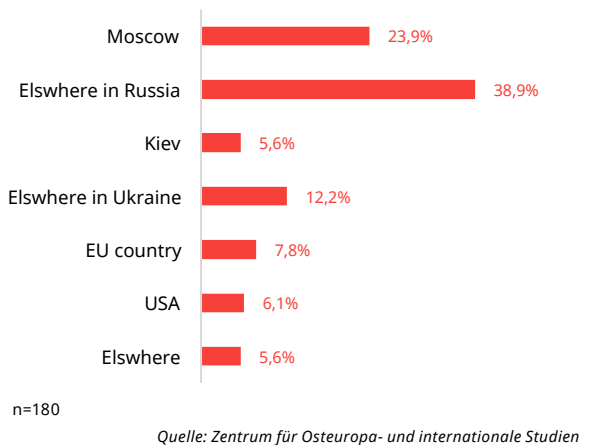


FIGURE 10
If you are thinking about leaving Crimea, where would you prefer to go?



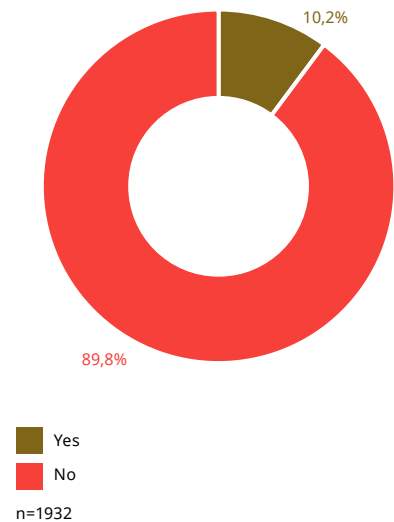
of Russia has become easier,⁴ only 22 percent of the respondents said that they have actually travelled to other parts of Russia since 2014. ► **FIGURE 5 + 6** Only three percent have travelled to places beyond Ukraine and Russia. This inward-looking orientation of the population effectively insulates the region from external influences that could destabilize the current political situation. However, the question is whether over a longer period of time parts of the population, in particular the younger generation, will feel too restricted and demand change, or exit the region in greater numbers.

Migration is also only a weak external linkage. Three percent of the respondents reported that they have lived for six months or longer in other parts of Ukraine, and six percent in Russia. Migration to both other parts of the Former Soviet Union and Western countries has been very limited. ► **FIGURE 7** This is in part also explained by the fact that it is difficult for Crimeans to obtain visas to go to European countries.

Twenty-one percent of the survey respondents indicated that relatives or friends of theirs have left Crimea since 2014. ► **FIGURE 8** Estimates put the total number at 40,000 to 60,000 (<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/crimea>), of which at least half are Crimean Tatars. Exit reduces the potential for political opposition but it also creates a set of new transnational or -regional linkages. Their medium- to long-term impact might be more varied. Economic remittances sent through these networks can sustain the status quo by providing households with a financial buffer, but as they are accompanied by an exchange of experiences they can also prolong resistance and reshape expectations vis-à-vis the political regime in the region. The current flow of economic remittances to Crimean households is limited and mostly centred on Russia: 17 percent said they regularly or occasionally receive remittances from Russia, eleven percent receive remittances regularly or occasionally from other parts of Ukraine, and the flow from other post-Soviet states and Western countries is negligible. ► **FIGURE 9** This also underpins that Russia is the key migration destination for Crimeans (with the exception of the Crimean Tatars).

According to the survey data, about ten percent of the respondents said that they are currently contemplating leaving Crimea. ► **FIGURE 11** They are concentrated in the younger age categories: 37 percent of those thinking about emigrating are between 18 and 29 years old, and 22 percent are between 30 and 42 years old. For those considering migration, Russia is by far the most desirable destination (about 63 percent of those thinking about leaving would go to Russia, about 18 percent to Ukraine and only just below 8 percent to an EU country and 6 percent to the US). ► **FIGURE 10** If the question is asked more generally – ‘Would you like to live in a country belonging to the EU?’ – only 12 percent of the survey respondents answer positively. Limited actual contact with life in the EU, the EU’s sanction regime against Russia, and EU support for Ukraine are the obvious explanations for this low level of attractiveness. If the data is broken down by ethnicity, Crimean Tatars are significantly more interested in living in an EU member state

FIGURE 11
Are you currently thinking about leaving Crimea?



Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

⁴ This wording of the survey questions relating to the relationship between Crimea and the Russian Federation does not reflect an endorsement of the annexation of Crimea but is borne out of ethical considerations. The interviewers and respondents cannot be put in a potentially adversarial relationship through the formulation of the survey questions.

– 32 percent answered ‘yes’. ► FIGURE 12 This result reflects the more precarious position of the Crimean Tatars in Crimea.

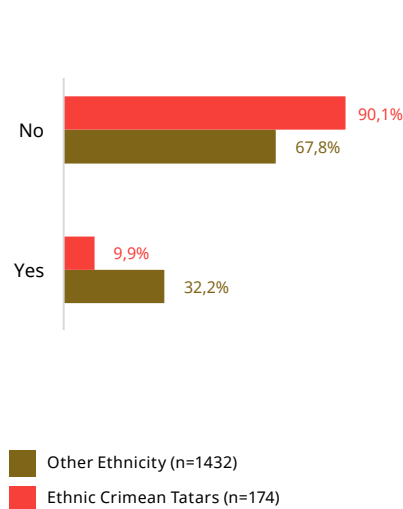
Citizenship and identity

Already prior to the annexation of Crimea by Russia there had been ample speculation about Russia issuing passports to citizens of neighbouring states. Crimea was considered one of the prime target areas for this policy. According to the ZOiS survey, only 12 percent of Crimeans held a Russian passport six years ago.

Asked about their citizenship today, the vast majority of 80 percent confirmed that they are Russian citizens. ► FIGURE 13 Russian citizenship was conferred automatically on all Crimean residents in 2014. Residents had to actively opt out of Russian citizenship within one month of 18 March. When asked about identity, seemingly those most dissatisfied with the status as Russian citizens ‘escape’ it by declaring themselves to be ‘Crimean’ (krymchanin). Separating the sample by Crimean Tatars and ‘others’ confirms this expectation – 39 percent of the sampled Crimean Tatars chose ‘Crimean’. Compared to other ethnicities, i.e. mostly Russians, a higher share of Crimean Tatars affirmed Ukrainian citizenship or dual Russian-Ukrainian citizenship as their identity – all are indications of their dissatisfaction with the automatic allocation of Russian citizenship after March 2014. ► FIGURE 14

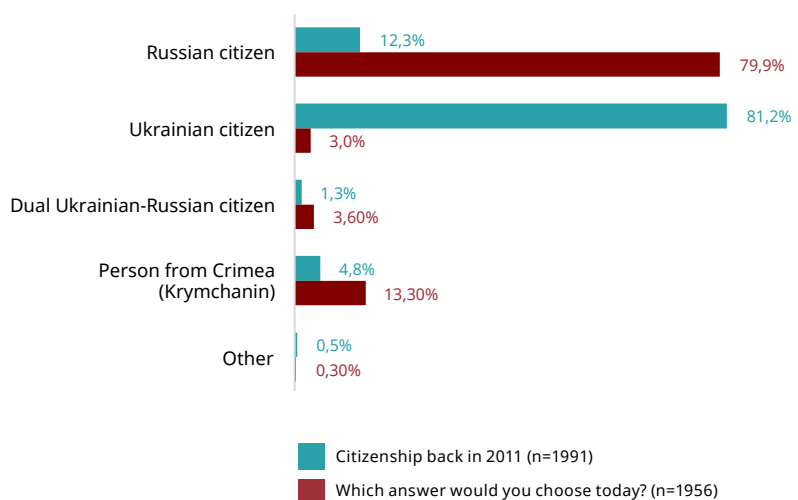
In general, the notion of being Crimean had been prominent in Crimean politics since the 1990s (being the preferred identity category of about a third of the regional population in 2013). The continued relevance of this regional identity per se does not equate with separatist mobilization. As a result of

FIGURE 12
Would you personally like to live in an EU country?



Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

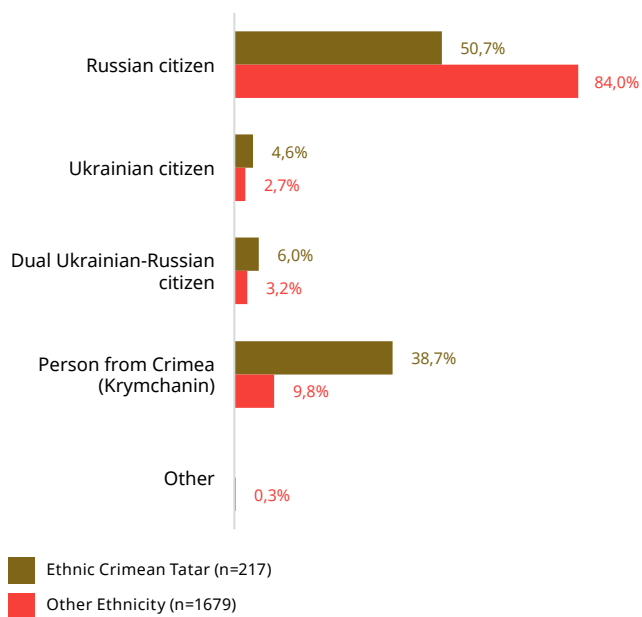
FIGURE 13
Citizenship



Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

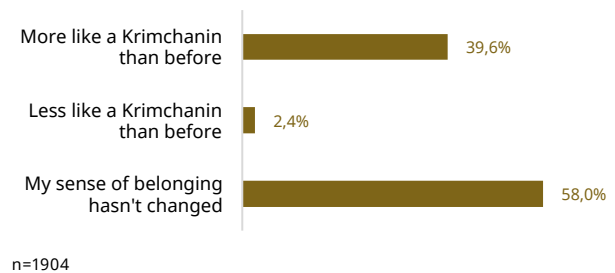
the political developments since 2014, 40 percent of the survey respondents saw this identity further strengthened (while 58 percent saw it unchanged and only two percent saw it weakened). ► FIGURE 15 Thus, the strong sense of a distinctive regional identity not only persists in Crimea, but has been strengthened by the incorporation into the Russian Federation. Probably, this is a combination of a new regionalist sentiment and dissatisfaction with both Russia and Ukraine. This is confirmed by a differently worded question asking about the place the respondents consider their ‘home’: the generic answer ‘the place where I live’ as a specific locality within Crimea and Crimea as a whole are by far the two most popular choices (jointly accounting for 90 percent of the answers). Only six and one percent respectively call Russia and Ukraine their home. ► FIGURE 16 Surveys have often included the category ‘former USSR’ as an identity category. In Crimea it had remained relevant. By now, the political reality has clearly turned this identifier into a negligible category when placed next to regional and country references. In line with the insularity of the population documented above, the idea of identifying beyond the local is irrelevant.

FIGURE 14
Crimea: If asked about your citizenship, which answer would you choose?



Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

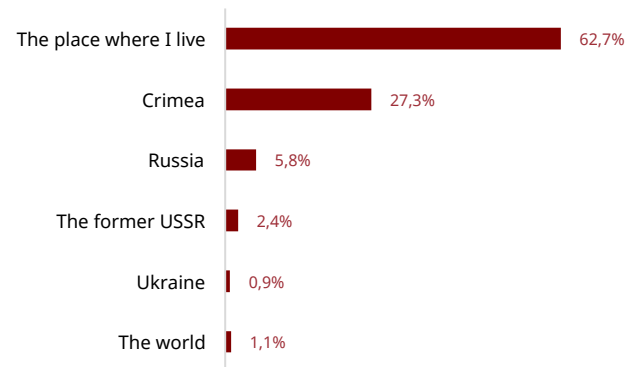
FIGURE 15
Crimea: What about your sense of belonging to your region? After the events of 2013–16 do you feel...



n=1904

Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

FIGURE 16
Which of the following constitutes ‘home’ for you?



n=1998

Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

When asked about their ethnicity, the ZOiS survey by and large confirms the latest Russian census of Crimea of 2014. In the ZOiS survey 68 percent of the respondents self-identified as ethnic Russians, just below eight percent as ethnic Ukrainians, and twelve percent as Crimean Tatars. ► FIGURE 17 + 18 Crimea’s first Russia-administered census of October 2014 shows the Russian segment of the population increasing (from 60.4% in 2001 to 65.3%), the Ukrainian segment decreasing (from 24% to 15.1%) and the share of the Crimean Tatar population higher than in 2001 but relatively stable compared to the immediate pre- annexation period (10.3% in 2001 and 12.1% in 2014) (Euromaidanpress, 16 April 2015).

Thus, the biggest change has been the sharp decrease in the number of self-identified ethnic Ukrainians. This is likely to reflect both a reorientation in order to avoid drawing attention to oneself in an uncertain political climate as well as an actual shift in numbers as a result of out-migration from Crimea and in-migration by displaced people from the Donbas. Unlike standard censuses and surveys, the ZOiS survey included mixed ethnicity categories. A mixed Russian-Ukrainian background is likely to be an easier option to pick under the current political circumstances for those who would otherwise have described themselves as ‘ethnic Ukrainians’ but it might also pick up the fact that mixed backgrounds are not unusual in Crimea. At

FIGURE 17
There are many ethnic groups in Crimea.
Which one do you belong to?

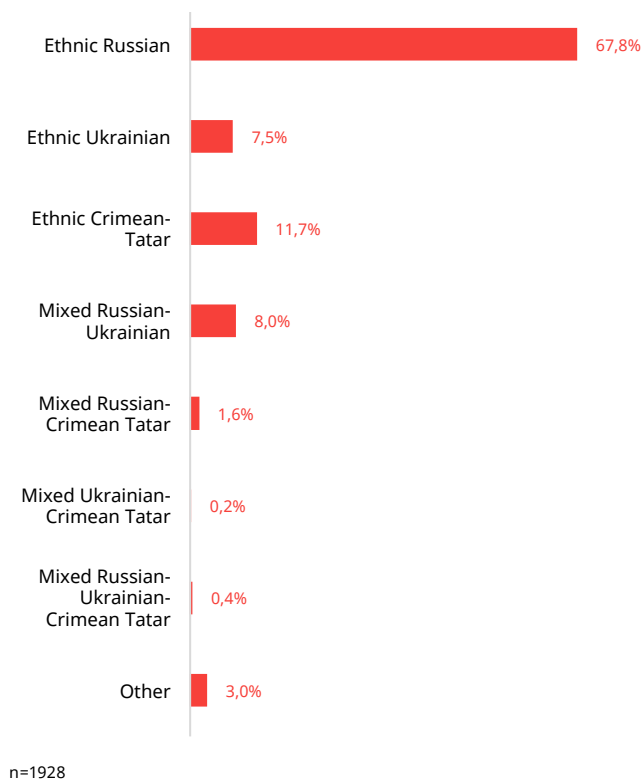
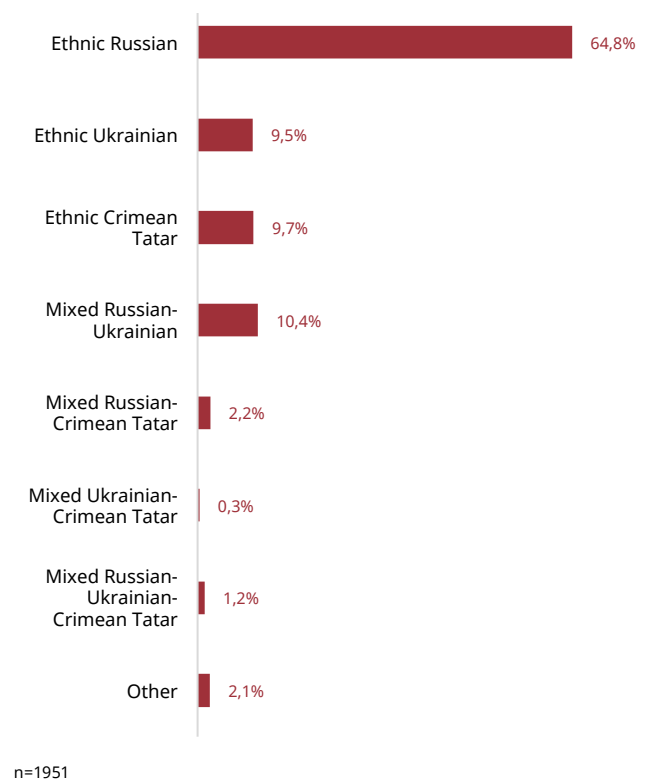


FIGURE 18
How would you define your ethnicity 6 years ago,
that is in 2011?



Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

the moment, the political dynamic might push those who would otherwise have chosen a mixed category to declaring themselves as ‘ethnic Russian’. While the data does not allow for a clear-cut answer here, it demonstrates that mixed categories should be included in standard surveys and censuses to avoid pushing respondents into clear-cut choices defined by the survey.

The vast majority of Crimeans are Russian-speakers. The only recent change is a drop in the share of people calling Ukrainian their ‘native’ language, and a small decrease in the share of Crimean Tatars declaring Crimean Tatar their ‘native’ language. The former in particular is likely to be a politically motivated shift. According to the ZOIS survey, 80 percent of the Crimean respondents consider Russian their ‘native’ language, nine percent Crimean Tatar and only three percent Ukrainian. ► FIGURE 19 By comparison, in the 2001 Ukrainian census, the mixed linguistic category ‘Russian and Ukrainian’ was chosen by just five percent of the respondents. Answers to questions about ‘native’ language tap into symbolic identification rather than just actual language use. Overall, however, in Crimea these differences are small. When asked about the language they speak, Russian is overwhelmingly prominent (89%) and exceeds those identifying Russian as a ‘native’ language. ► FIGURE 20 The mixed categories in the survey demonstrate bilingual/trilingual language use including Russian.

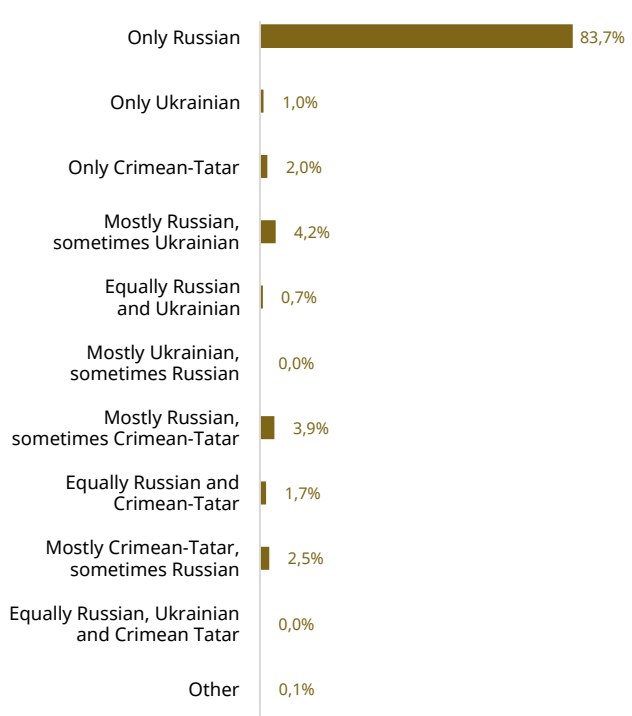
FIGURE 19
What is your native language?



n=2005

Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

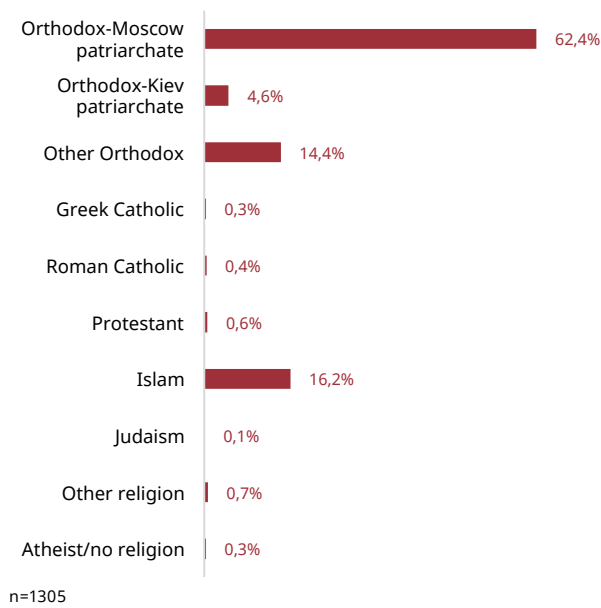
FIGURE 20
What language do you normally speak at home?



n=2006

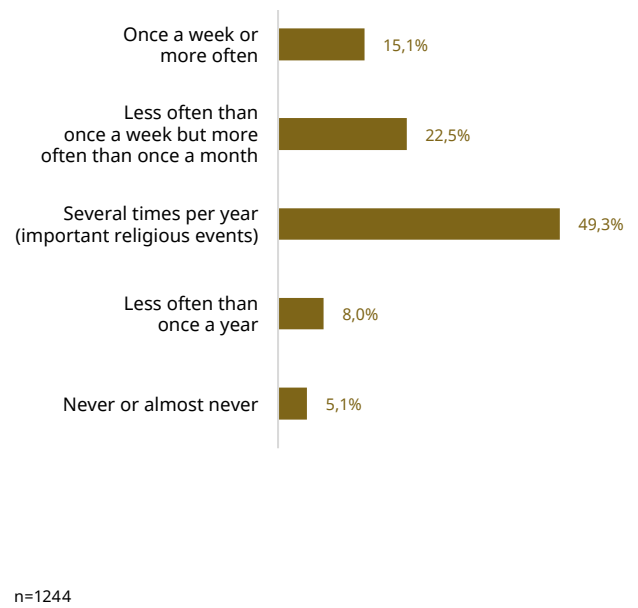
Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

FIGURE 21
What is your religion?



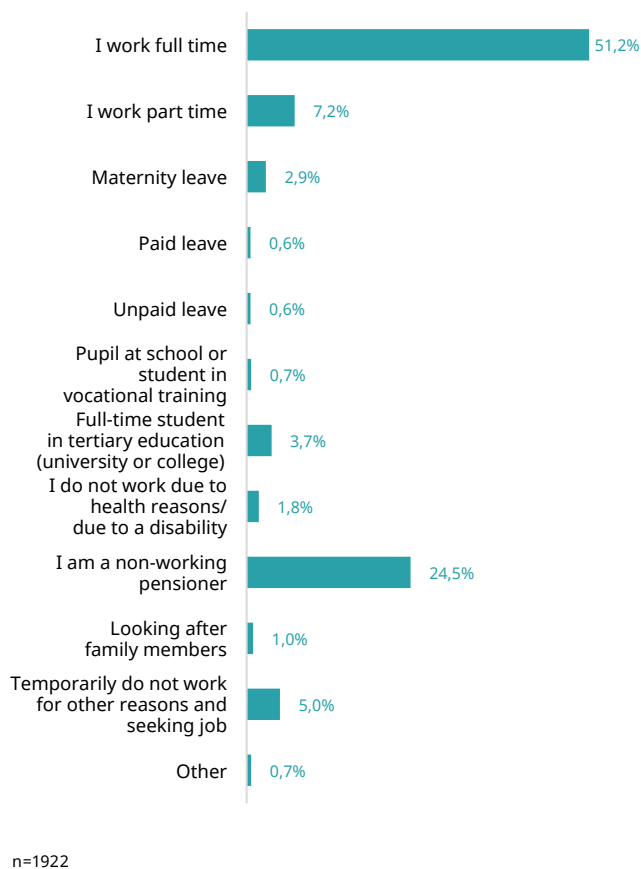
Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

FIGURE 22
How often do you visit the church/mosque/synagogue or other place of worship?



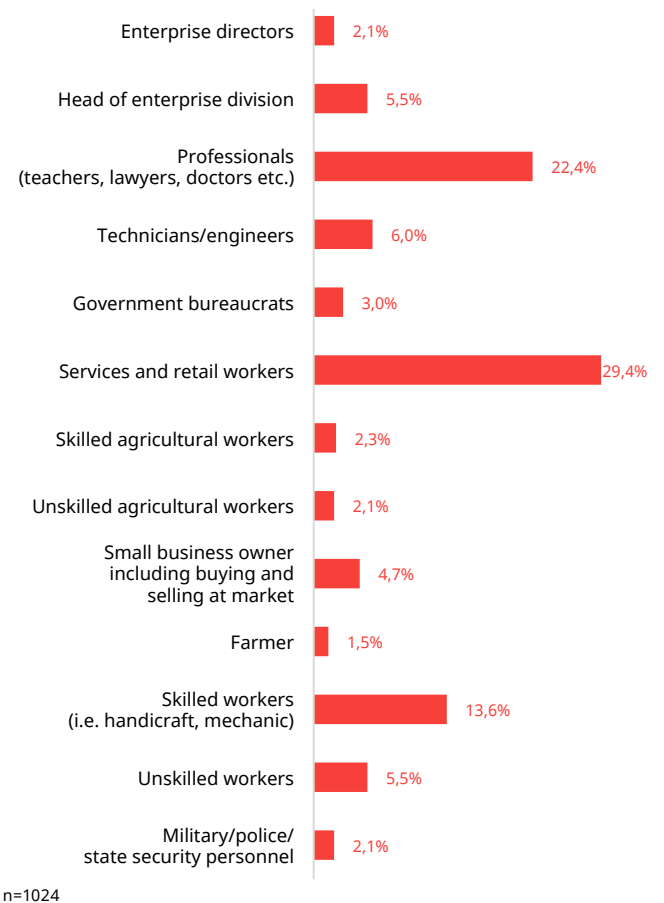
Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

FIGURE 23
What is your occupational status?



Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

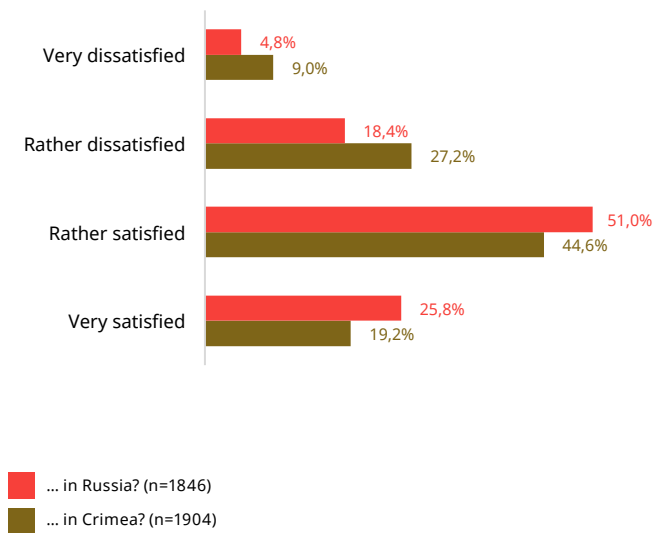
FIGURE 24
What is your job?



Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

FIGURE 25

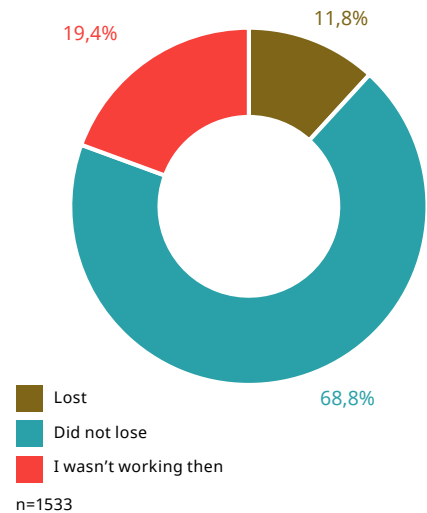
How satisfied are you with the economy... ?



Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

FIGURE 26

Have you lost your job since Crimea became part of the Russian Federation in 2014?



Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

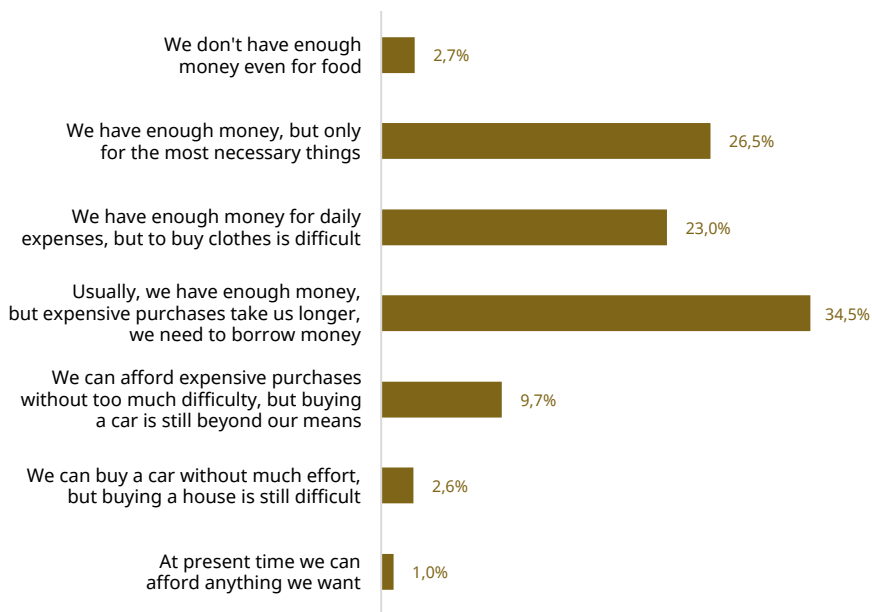
The most prominent religious orientation in Crimea is Orthodoxy: mostly (62 percent) but not exclusively following the Moscow Patriarchate. The most notable result here is that 16 percent identified Islam as their religion, a figure that is higher than the share of ethnic Crimean Tatars and therefore has to include some of those identifying as ethnic Russians. ► FIGURE 21 Fifty percent of the respondents attend religious services a few times a year to mark bigger occasions, and about 38 percent attend once a week or a few times a month. ► FIGURE 22

Everyday life in Crimea

Just above 50 percent of the respondents reported being in full-time employment, mostly employed in the services and retail sector, working as professionals (teachers, doctors etc.) or skilled workers. ► FIGURE 23 + 24 The high percentage of pensioners (25 percent) reflects the demographic structure of the Crimean population. A relatively small number of the respondents (twelve percent) recorded losing their job since 2014. ► FIGURE 26

A total of 64 percent said that they are either 'very satisfied' or 'rather satisfied' with the state of the Crimean economy, compared to 36 percent being 'rather dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied'. The Russian economic situation as a comparative reference point is seen even more positively. Seventy percent expressed a degree of satisfaction, compared to 23 percent expressing a sense of dissatisfaction. ► FIGURE 25 Given the politically charged nature of the question, a response bias cannot be excluded. Therefore, the answers should be understood primarily as reflecting the widespread hopes and expectations projected onto the Russian economy.

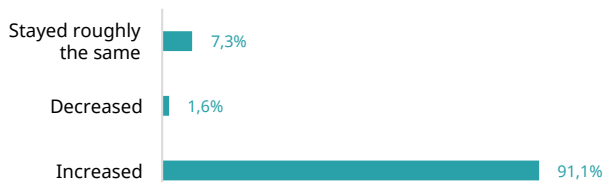
FIGURE 27
Which of the following statements best describes the financial situation of your family?



n=1905

Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

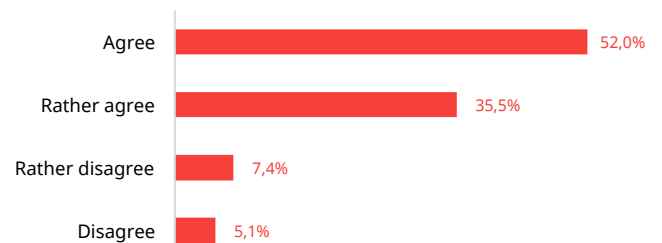
FIGURE 28
Over the last two years prices for everyday life goods in Crimea...



n=1952

Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

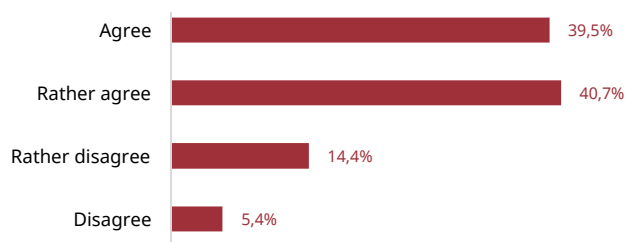
FIGURE 29
Different ethnic groups in Crimea (Russians, Ukrainians, Crimean Tatars etc.) share a Crimean identity



n=1845

Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

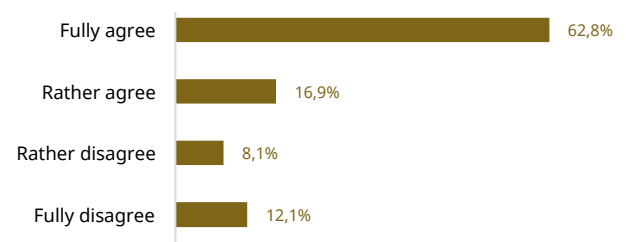
FIGURE 30
Different ethnic groups in Crimea (Russians, Ukrainians, Crimean Tatars etc.) live peacefully side by side



n=1835

Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

FIGURE 31
The Russians authorities were right to abolish the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people



n=1708

Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

Twenty-nine percent of the respondents reported that their salary buys them less now than three years ago (39 percent saw no change and 20 percent said they could afford more now). There is, however, overall agreement (91 percent) that prices in Crimea have increased since 2014. ► **FIGURE 28** We asked a specific question about the functioning of Crimean bankcards outside of Crimea, but it was only answered by a very small number of respondents – a confirmation of the low travel rates of the population overall and the limited use of bankcards. The answers confirm anecdotal evidence, namely that bankcards issued in Crimea since 2014 are not valid outside of Crimea, including Russia.

When the question about the economic situation is made more concrete by references to personal finances (respondents were asked to choose one option), the discrepancy between the general assessment of the Crimean and Russian economy and the everyday experience of the Crimean population becomes apparent. The overall impression is one of clear financial constraints facing the vast majority of the Crimean population. Twenty-seven percent of the survey respondents said that they could only afford the most necessary things. The next category, implying somewhat greater affluence, was chosen by 23 percent – it captures those who say that they have money for food but struggle to buy clothes. Thirty-five percent reported that they could cover everyday expenses but have to rely on loans or credit for more expensive purchases. This answer is put in perspective by the subsequent category, chosen by ten percent, which captures those who say that they can afford to buy expensive goods, but that buying a car is still beyond their means. Only three percent of the respondents described themselves as being in a position to buy a car. ► **FIGURE 27**

Interethnic relations

Multiethnicity has been an important element of the self-definition of the Crimean population over time. It is confirmed in our survey: 88 percent of the respondents agree ('fully' or 'rather') with the statement that a Crimean identity is shared by the different ethnic groups residing in the region. ► **FIGURE 29**

Underneath this image lies a distinctive sense of uncertainty and a degree of polarization. The majority of survey respondents thought that the different ethnic groups in Crimea currently live peacefully side by side. 20 percent disagreed ('fully' or 'rather') with this statement, thereby indicating both uncertainty and unease with the situation at the moment which reaches beyond the Crimean Tatar share of the population. ► **FIGURE 30** This result is mirrored in the reactions to the Russian authorities banning the main political Crimean Tatar organization Mejlis: 20 percent 'fully' or 'rather' disagreed with this step, compared to 80 percent endorsing this policy. ► **FIGURE 31**

About ten percent expect that interethnic relations will deteriorate in the next five years, whereas 50 percent expect interethnic relations to improve, and 40 percent do not foresee any change. When asked more concretely about the level of day-to-day interactions between the different ethnic groups in Crimea, 24 percent replied that it had increased, eleven percent thought it had decreased, and a majority of 66 percent saw no change. ► **FIGURE 32 + 33**

FIGURE 32
Do you think interethnic relationships will become better/worse/ stay the same in the next 5 years in Crimea?

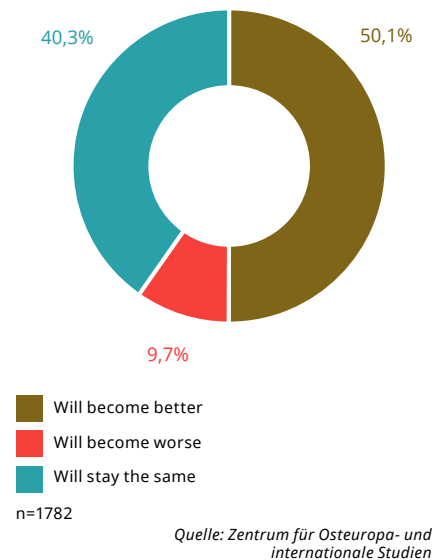
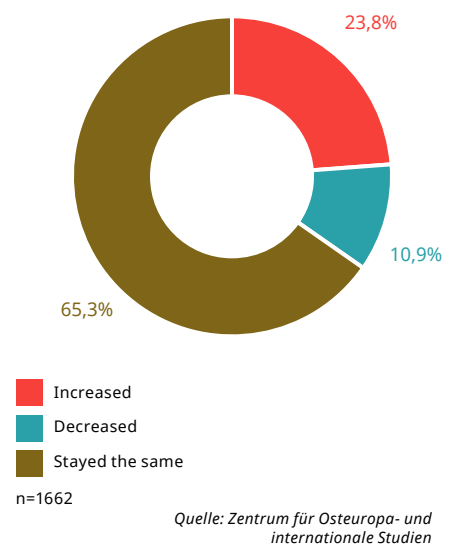
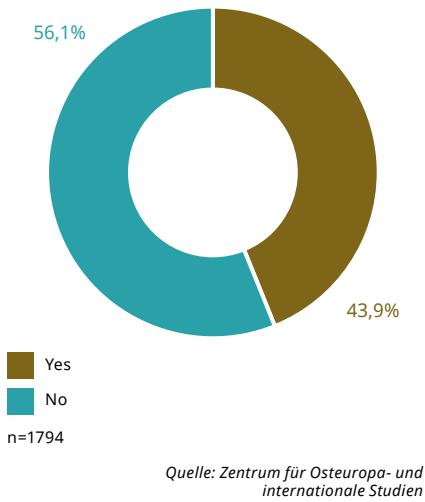


FIGURE 33
Crimea: In your neighbourhood, has the level of daily interaction between the different ethnic groups changed since 2014? Has it...



Assessment of the developments since 2014

FIGURE 34
Were you surprised by the Russians actions?



Forty-four percent of the survey respondents said they were surprised by the Russian military action in Crimea in February 2014, compared to 56 percent saying that they were not surprised. ► **FIGURE 34** The latter cannot be read as proof of Crimean mobilization at the time, but rather as a general sense that Russia had retained a stake in the region and, possibly, as a retrospective logic imposed on the developments.

The survey reveals variation in the assessments of the political developments among respondents. This variation is even higher when one compares the Crimean Tatars to the rest of the sample. Only eight percent of the Crimean Tatars saw the reason for Crimea becoming part of the Russian Federation in the mobilization of the Crimean population – compared to 25 percent of the rest of the sample. Conversely, 24 percent of the Crimean Tatars see it as a result of Russian actions, compared to 17 percent of the rest of the sample. Interestingly, there is agreement across the different ethnic groups about Kyiv’s neglect of the region over many years being a reason behind the events of 2014 in Crimea (both about 33 percent). A greater share of the Crimean Tatars (35 percent) linked the events to the Euromaidan, compared to 25 percent of the rest of the respondents. ► **FIGURE 35** This suggests that for the majority of the Crimean population the Euromaidan

FIGURE 35
Crimea has become part of the Russian Federation...

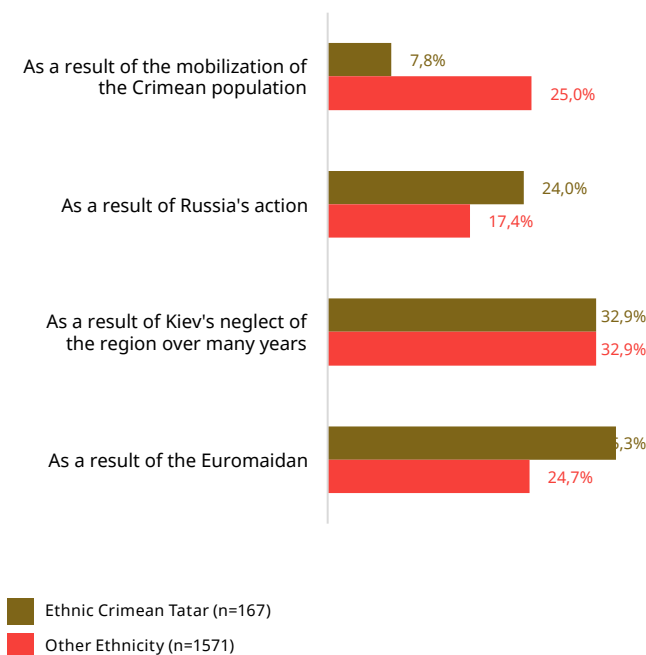
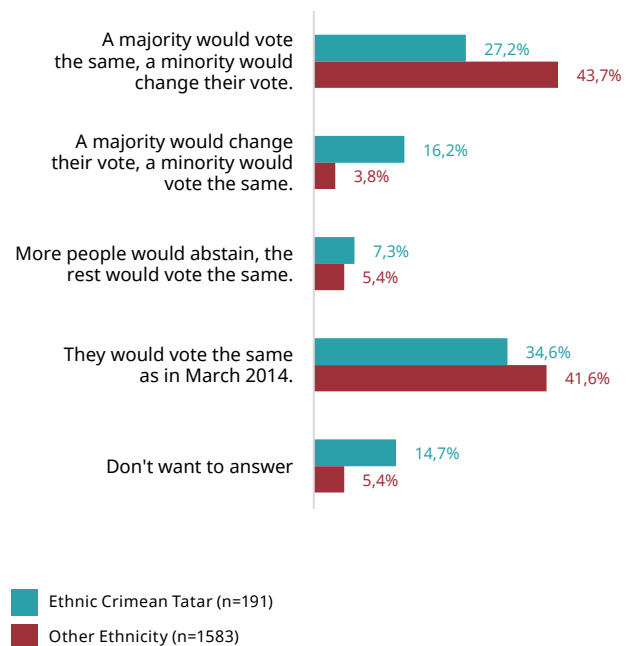


FIGURE 36
If a referendum about Crimea joining the Russian Federation was held today how – in your opinion – would Crimeans vote?

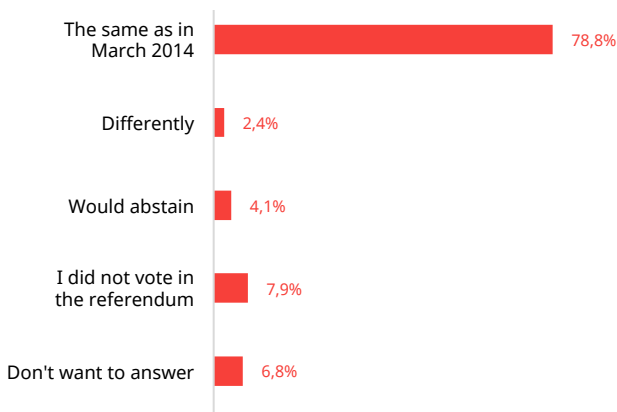


was not a major point of reference, although arguably Russia’s actions in Crimea were directly related to the change in the political regime in Kyiv, in particular the emergence of the interim government following President Yanukovych’s ouster.

A survey question about a new referendum on joining Russia is clearly a sensitive issue. A more impersonal question about the overall outcome of a new referendum as well as the more personal question about one’s own potential repeat vote reveal a few small nuances: an overwhelming majority (86 percent) of the non-Crimean Tatar respondents would expect the same or a only marginally different referendum result. The Crimean Tatars are more cautious in their prediction, with 52 percent saying that the result would be the same or change only slightly. Sixteen percent of the Crimean Tatar respondents said that a majority would change their vote (compared to only three percent of the rest of the respondents). Overall, the Crimean Tatars felt more uncomfortable answering this question, with 15 percent choosing not to answer (compared to only five percent of the non-Crimean Tatar respondents). ► FIGURE 36

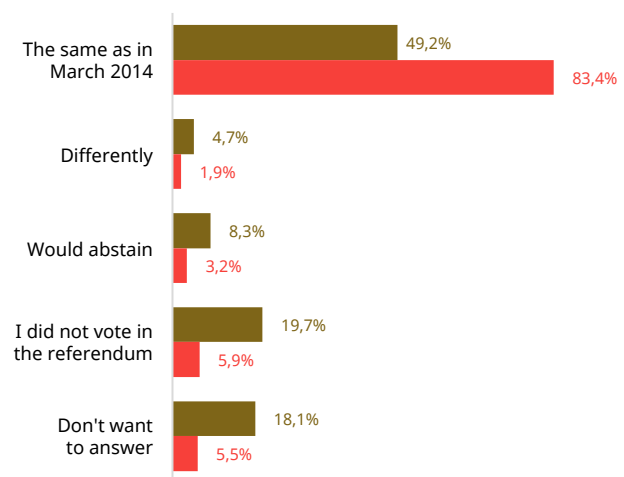
The more direct question about personal vote choice in a repeat referendum yielded a clear overall confirmation of the ‘yes’-vote – 79 percent of the respondents chose this option. ► FIGURE 37 + 38

FIGURE 37
How would you vote if a referendum about Crimea joining the Russian Federation was held today?



n=1913

FIGURE 38
Compared to 2014, how would you vote if a referendum about Crimea joining the Russian Federation was held today?

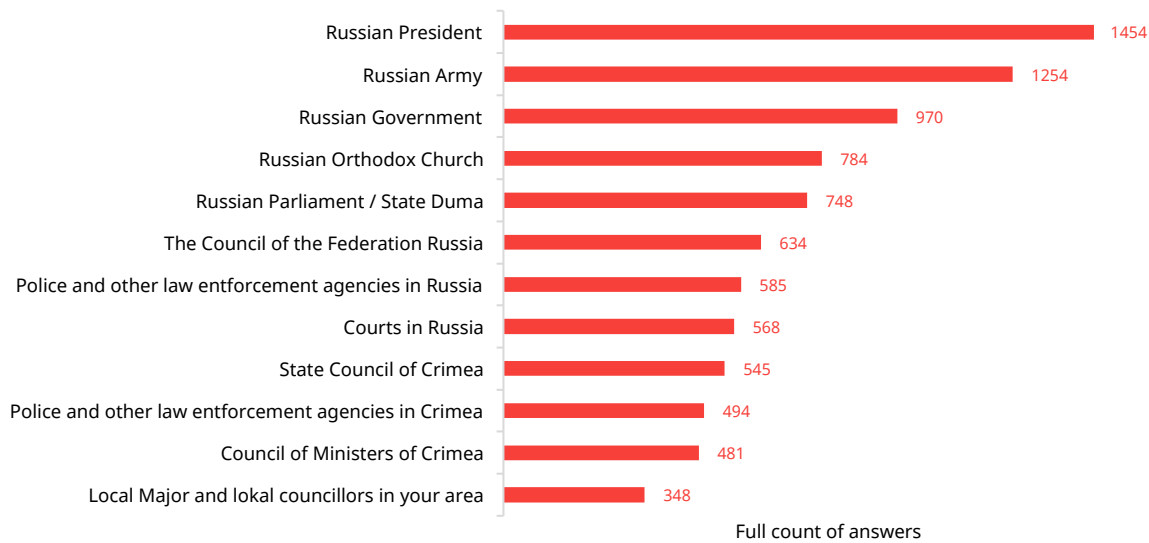


Other Ethnicity (n=1642)
 Ethnic Crimean Tatar (n=193)

Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

FIGURE 39
I trust...



Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

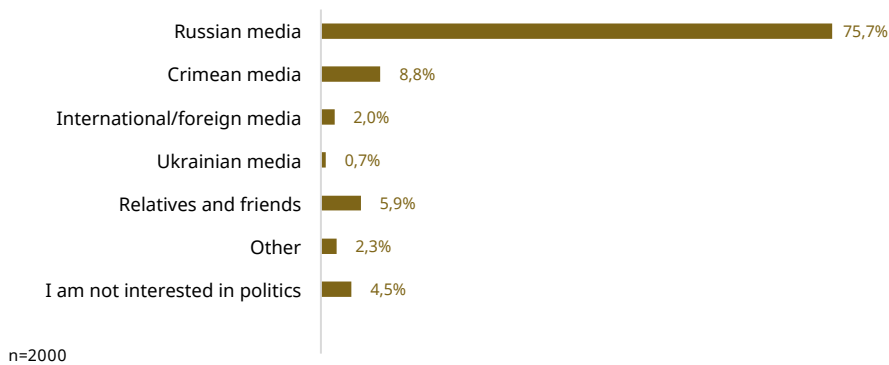
When asked about their level of trust in various political institutions (for each institution respondents could choose between ‘I don’t trust’, ‘I rather not trust’, ‘I rather trust’, ‘I trust’), trust in the Russian president is the highest, followed by the Russian army and national-level state institutions.

► **FIGURE 39** What is more interesting, however, are the very low levels of trust associated with region-wide Crimean and local institutions. This suggests a more long-term disillusionment with regional and local government and politics predating 2014. Combined with the dissatisfaction expressed about Kyiv’s long-term neglect of the region, mentioned above, this dissatisfaction with local politics suggests two key elements in the explanation of why the incorporation of Crimea into the Russian Federation was met with approval and expectations on the part of a substantial part of its population. That the referendum did not meet democratic standards and the turnout and exact results are imprecise is indisputable, but it is also certain that the majority was supportive.

The ZOiS survey confirms that the Crimean population is fully integrated into the Russian media sphere. Seventy-six percent of the respondents said that they obtain their information about politics through the Russian media; nine percent use local media as their main source of information, and the influence of Ukrainian and international media is negligible. ► **FIGURE 40**

Approval for democracy in general is lukewarm among the Crimean population, with 48 percent agreeing with the statement that democracy remains the best possible form of government despite its flaws and 41 percent being non-committal. ► **FIGURE 41** The reported preferences for Crimea’s economic system are as follows: 39 percent prefer the status quo, 35 percent favour deepening market reforms, and 27 percent would opt for the return to a socialist economy. ► **FIGURE 42**

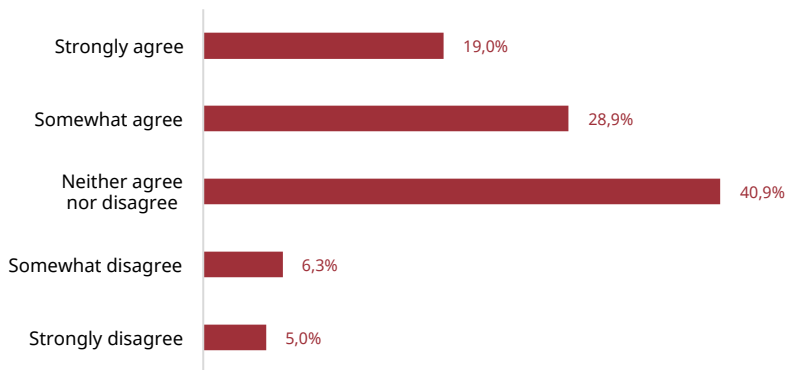
FIGURE 40
Where do you get most of your information about politics?



n=2000

Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

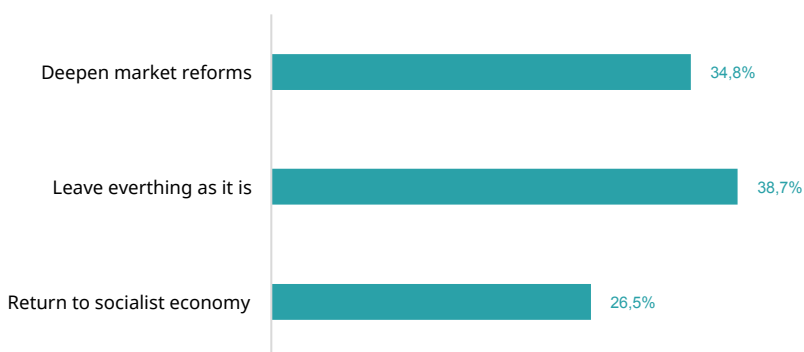
FIGURE 41
Crimea: Democracy might have its problems, but it is still best form of government.



n=1782

Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

FIGURE 42
Crimea: What type of economy should exist in Crimea?



n=1631

Quelle: Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien

Conclusion

The ZOiS survey provides a snapshot of the current public mood in Crimea at a sensitive political moment. It is clear that the survey conditions are not ideal, but this is not a reason for not listening to the Crimeans' own voice. The extent to which answers to some of the politically charged questions, regarding the status of Crimea or the impact of the Western sanctions, reflect actually held beliefs is impossible to determine. However, this is an inherent problem in survey research. The survey results are best understood as indicating trends rather than exact measures. The questions tapping into everyday life in the region are particularly revealing. The survey respondents confirm the increase in prices, a severe disruption of links to the rest of Ukraine, including contacts to Ukrainian relatives and friends, limited travel to other parts of Russia, the absence of personal international reference points, a near-complete integration into the Russian media sphere. The regional identity category krymchanin (Crimean) has gained further in significance, where one might have expected a strengthening of the identification as ethnic Russians or Russian citizens. This strong sense of regional distinctiveness will have to be carefully managed by Moscow if it wants to maintain a stable status quo. The Crimean Tatars remain more sceptical of the current regime. The societal and political integration of the Crimean Tatars could not be taken for granted within the Ukrainian state and continues to be a potential destabilizing factor in a Crimea controlled by Russia. For the moment, Russia has opted for repression rather than active accommodation of the Crimean Tatars – a strategy that is bound to build up opposition. Two further interesting findings of the ZOiS survey are the widespread lack of trust in regional and local political institutions and the view, shared by the Crimean Tatars, that Kyiv had neglected the region in the years leading up to 2014. The combination of this perception of neglect, the experience of the Ukrainian blockade and Western sanctions, and the pervasiveness of Russian information flows, linkages and socialization suggests that a change in the opinions of the majority of the Crimean population on the annexation is unlikely in the foreseeable future.

Imprint

Author

Prof. Dr. Gwendolyn Sasse

Published by

© Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS) gGmbH

Address

Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS) gGmbH
Mohrenstraße 60
10117 Berlin
info@zois-berlin.de
www.zois-berlin.de

Citation

Sasse, Gwendolyn: Terra incognita – The public mood in Crimea, ZOiS Report 3/2017, (https://www.zois-berlin.de/fileadmin/media/Dateien/ZOiS_Reports/ZOiS_Report_3_2017.pdf)

ISSN 2512-7233

Layout

Yuko Stier