

Situation of Russian scientists following the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army

March 16th 2022

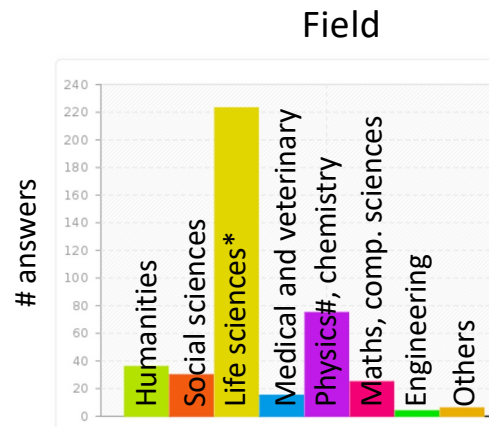
Online anonymous survey conducted between March 13th and March
16th

Statistics and methods

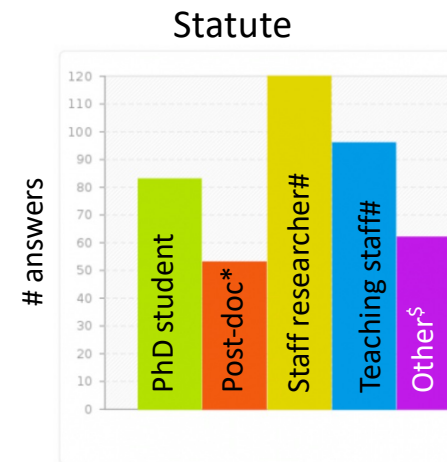
- The survey was initially shared with an online group of mostly biologists who studied in Moscow, it was then picked up and shared by an online media.
- Nber of answers with informative content (i.e. beyond the data reported on slide 3): 414
- Nber of full answers : 352
- Nber of free comments : 230
- Main geographic locations of responders:
 - Moscow: 171
 - St Petersburg: 110
 - Outside Russia: 46
 - Novosibirsk: 14
 - Puschino: 9
 - Nizhny Novgorod: 7
 - Tyumen: 5

The following slides only report the answers with informative content. The survey was anonymous and captcha-protected, cookies ensured that the survey could only be filled once from a given computer. Quotes were translated from Russian when needed.

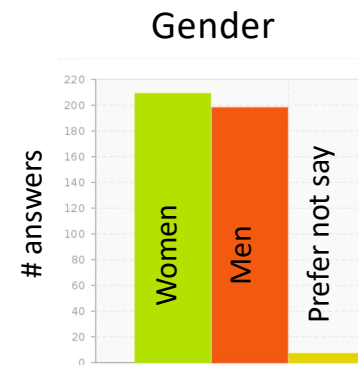
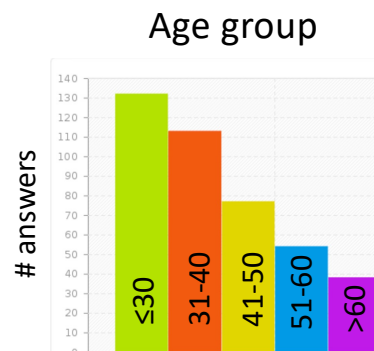
Fields, statute, age, gender



*: includes ecology and environmental studies
 #: includes astrophysics and earth sciences

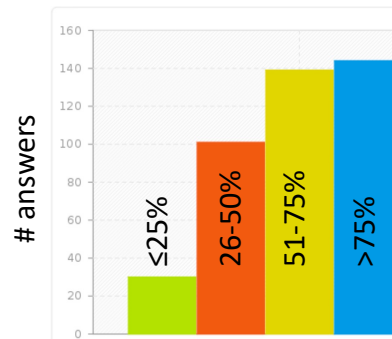


* fixed-term contact
 #: permanent contract
 \$: mostly undergrad and master students

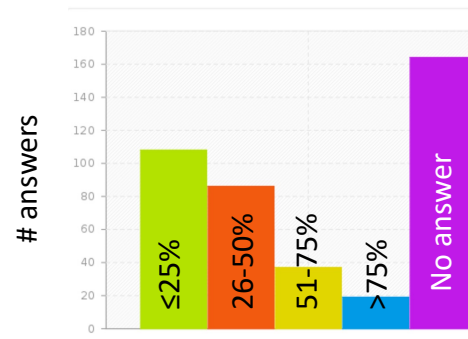


Reaction of the academic community to the Russian invasion of Ukraine

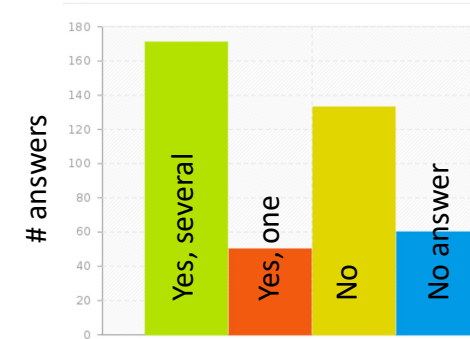
What is your estimation of the fraction of the Russian academic community that unambiguously condemns, publicly or privately, the ongoing invasion ?



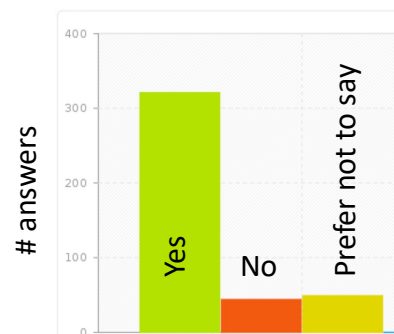
Do you have an estimate of the proportion of the signatories of the open letter and tribune who have been or will be threatened or otherwise punished ?



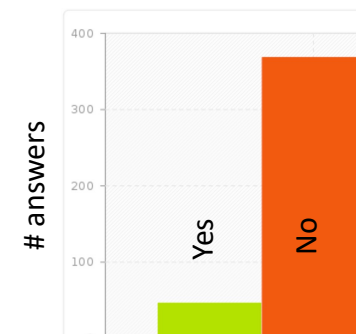
Do you personally know scientists currently in danger for their opposition to the invasion ?



Have you yourself signed a text condemning the invasion of Ukraine ?



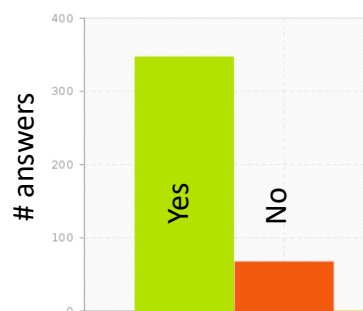
Have you yourself been threatened, jailed, or demoted for your condemning of the invasion ?



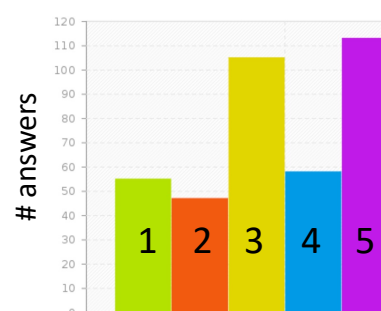
Position on international sanctions against Russian scientists

(1: I fully agree; 5: I fully disagree)

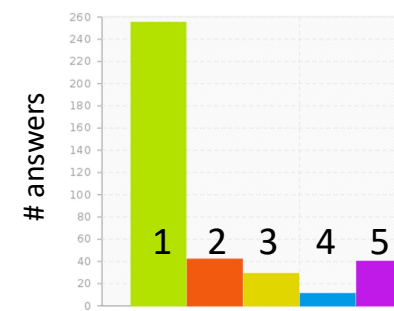
Has your work been negatively affected by some of the sanctions ?



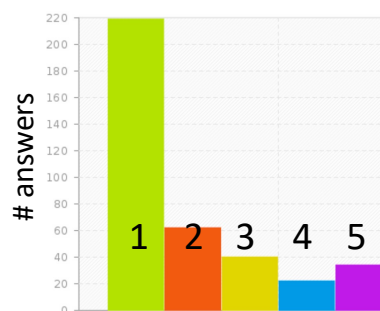
It is a necessary ill to sanction Russian scientific institutions given the statement of the Rectors of Russian universities in support of the invasion.



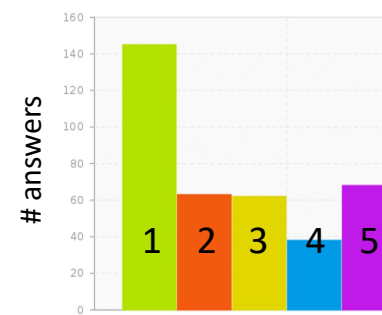
Restrictions of international collaborations are targeting the wrong population and may be counterproductive in the long term.



Russian scientists should not be sanctioned for decisions taken by their government.



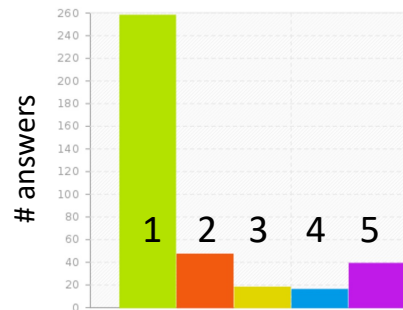
I have personally suffered from one of the sanctions



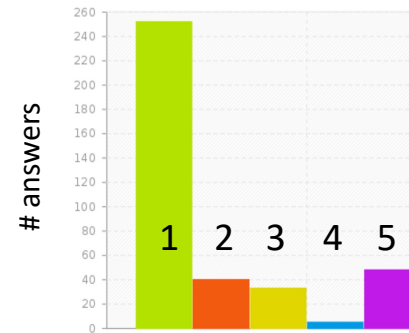
How could European countries help Russian scientists?

(1: I fully agree; 5: I fully disagree)

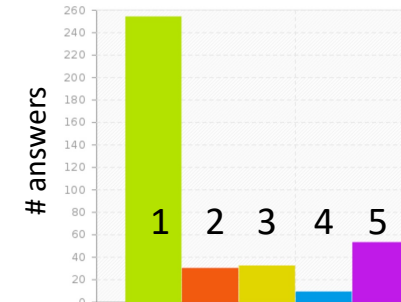
Facilitate the obtention of visa and financial support for Russian scientists who would like to leave Russia during the invasion.



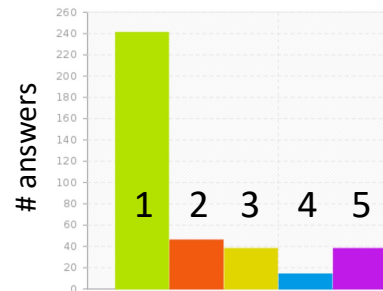
Abandon sanctions that affect the ability of individual scientists to work in Russia (e.g. journal bans)



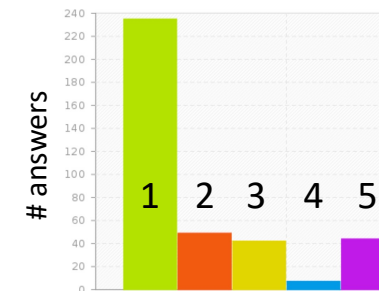
Demand that freedom of speech be respected in Russia and that jailed or threatened opponents to the invasion be freed.



Strengthen remote collaborations between European and Russian/Ukrainian scientists (dedicated online seminar series, matching of European and Russian/Ukrainian scientists, ...)



Prepare the future by planning a dedicated European funding scheme for Ukrainian and Russian scientists to be implemented after the end of the war



Analysis of free comments

Out of 230 comments, only two are supportive of the invasion. There is a deep feeling of guilt and shame about the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the plight of Ukrainians.

A substantial fraction of the community supports or understands international sanctions against Russian academic institutions. But they insist that the ties of individual researchers to the international community should not be completely cut and that sanctions should be lifted as soon as peace is in sight. Long-term sanctions against international academic collaboration would contribute to fulfill Putin's aim of isolating Russia from the west, and of isolating a population that mostly do not support his policies. A country without research and higher education is less resistant to propaganda. Ruining the Russian academic system may generate long-term frustration with Europe and the USA among Russian scientists. International sanctions that would lead to the ruin of Russian academia may thus be counterproductive in the long run.

Russian academics feel caught between a rock and a hard place: rejected both from their government (and part of the population) for their anti-war position and by the international community because they are Russian. Some sanctions from the west (e.g. ban of publication of Russian authors in international journals) are now also imposed by the Russian government. The international sanctions are felt to indiscriminately target supporters and opponents to the invasion.

Many see no future for research in Russia, some have already fled in fear of persecutions. The most frequent suggestion for help is to facilitate emigration to Europe or the USA (Visas, no discrimination against Russians in job hiring).

Several scientists have decided not to sign letters condemning the invasion for fear of reprisals. The young are the most at risk of political repression. Several comments clearly refer to the Putin regime as a brutal dictatorship (people in detention are deprived of their medical treatments for chronic diseases).

The best research in Russia is, at least partially, funded by international collaborations, from Europe or the USA. Many very long-term collaborations (10-20 years) have been severed within a few days. If sanctions persist for many months, there is a strong risk to isolate and ruin an educated, pro-European, community that could contribute to reinstalling democracy in Russia.

A large part of the scientific equipment comes from foreign countries: consumables and maintenance are not assured anymore. The ban on Visa/Mastercard and Paypal prevents even the most basic international purchases (Word, Zoom subscription, software licenses), as well as the payment of article processing charges for Open Access journals. A couple of comments hint at a redirection from Europe towards China for consumables or research topics.

Some research in Russia is critical for the world (e. g. the Russian ecosystems represent 1/3 of emerged lands and many European ecologists need to collaborate with Russian scientists to explore this). The isolation of Russian science would have strong consequences on international research in some fields.

Some quotes (1)

I and many of my colleagues feel a sense of shame for the crimes of the Russian government and for the fact that we allowed this situation to happen. Many of my colleagues and students are protesting against this criminal war and are being repressed. In any case, we and our children will have to answer for these crimes.

Despite all these sanctions I think that we have no right to complain about inconveniences while there is still a war in Ukraine.

We are ashamed and hurt. We feel like hostages in a concentration camp.

I believe that country without normal science and education is a stronghold for obscurantism and anti-progress. If all Russian scientists emigrate or won't be able to continue research and education, there will be a huge dark hole on the map. It will affect all the humanity in a really bad way.

Banning Russian scientists would help our government to punish thinking people and would be the favor to the total putinist indoctrination of our people. It can be really dangerous for the world

I have been detained at an anti-war rally. I realize that foreign sanctions cannot be targeted precisely. I strongly support sanctioning individual Russian organizations, e.g., not selling equipment to the universities whose rectors have signed the pro-war letter. Banning joint papers with Russian scientists is not a good solution: this will only benefit Putin, as this promotes isolation of Russian scientists. In particular, there are suggestions already in Russia that scientific papers in international journals should no longer be an advantage in grant applications. Meanwhile, the internationally publishing researchers are the ones who tend to take the most active anti-Putin stance.

It is important to understand that demanding not to show affiliation with Russian universities and research organizations in publications will have the same devastating effect as a full ban for individual Russian authors, because in this case they will be forced by Russian authorities to stop publish in international journals.

The sanctions directed against Russian science are counterproductive, as they are aimed at the intellectual elite, which in the vast majority is opposed to the war. Thus, the scientific community of Russia is marginalized both by the European community and by the citizens of the Russian Federation who support the war in Ukraine.

All payments to European, American and Chinese manufacturers are blocked. We can't even renew Office 365 subscriptions and some programs like bioinformatics research. In general, this is a complete catastrophe and peaceful science in Russia will be destroyed. And yes, we fear arrests and reprisals for being anti-war.

Sanctions will kill (already killing) Russian science. As for the country it is ok since Russia deserves this after horrible invasion, but for scientists, the majority of which oppose this war, it is a kind of double hit.

Some quotes (2)

Teachers and lecturers in Russia are deeply depressed and demotivated, felt victimized from all three sides (Russian authorities, Ukrainian authorities and public attitude and also the Western undifferentiated response. The general situation is very touchy to say the least. And many can't and don't have options to leave the country (no money, no contacts, no offers, no understanding where to apply and if it's possible at all). They feel trapped and many feel betrayed by the world with which they have been happily and willingly cooperating. Inter alia, the latter poses a risk for them to become easy catches for pro-war pro-Putin propaganda.

Punishing scientists is punishing the most 'anti-war' group in Russia.

In January I have applied to several PhD positions abroad and some of them cancelled my application in March due to the war. It is extremely upsetting since I try to leave Russia because I disagree with the governmental position and now I have to stay in this country and risk my freedom

my graduate student was going for an internship in the UK, and now the foundation in the UK has refused to support this internship

I fled from Russia being not able to work under such pressure from the state. I am against war. My family is Ukrainian, and they are refugees now, together with me.

It is difficult to talk about it, but it was difficult to do science in Russia before, but now it is almost impossible. I am looking for a postdoc position abroad, I hope it will work

I could not stay silent, so I had to leave. The director of my institution is already told me that FSB did not approve my speech in social networks. I keep working with my team from abroad, without salary, just for keeping them out of total despair. None of us supports this war, but not all of us have a blessed opportunity to leave the country

I don't know how to help scientists in Russia. Acceptance of any such assistance would likely be criminalized by the government. If only to arrange mass emigration from the country, but this is impossible. Russian scientists are damned and doomed to extinction

The foreign scientific community could support us in the case of emigration, and push scientists to do this without cooperating with state institutions - this regime needs to be depleted, including intellectually. In any case, science cannot develop in prison. And we are hostages here now.

So the only help that can be potentially useful -- is to help to emigrate to those who wish to emigrate from Russia

People are fleeing from the possibility of being behind the Iron Curtain. Working visas to European countries would be a huge help to Russians who are discontented and frightened by the government's actions, and to scientists in particular.

Thank you for this survey. We (here in Russia) have almost no way to even just say what we really think - and not be arrested for it. Please be sure that there are much more scientists who are against the war than the open letter shows, but many of us are very afraid of possible repressions.

Some quotes (3)

I politely expressed my position that I do not support Putin's actions and the war in Ukraine, because Ukrainians and Russians are the closest historically and culturally nations, in my Facebook account. After that, I received a letter from the scientific secretary of my research institute that my position, which was created for me there, was canceled.

My accounts were arrested for transferring money to an organization that helps people detained at rallies against War.

I have not yet suffered personally from the oppression of Russian government. One reason is that, due to poor health, I do not participate in the protests. Unfortunately, even a 5-day detention in Russian prison, which is more than realistic for protesters, is dangerous for people with any chronic conditions, since you may not be able to obtain the necessary medicines neither medical help. We know several instances where people e.g. with diabetes narrowly avoided death under such circumstances.

I spent several nights waiting near police dept to give water and food for those who were arrested, most of them are young educated people who try desperately to say NO WAR. I was lucky enough to avoid police but they already know my license plate and my social networks profiles are under continuous attacks

freezing Visa/MC transactions renders impossible to pay for open access publications

Restrictions on the use of Visa/Mastercard, as well as hosters' refusals to work with Russia have led to the fact that some of the scientific databases maintained by Russian scientists are forced to hastily look for ways to continue working: to find new servers and bypass payment methods. This is the case, in particular, of my lab. We are trying to keep the databases accessible to foreign researchers. At the same time, we do not have complete confidence that the Internet will not be completely shut down and we will not be left without access to these resources. Already today it is virtually impossible to work without a VPN (also requires a method of payment), access to information is limited.

my own institution demands to re-orient my topics toward India and China that have nothing to do with my area of studies. In addition, my institution demands me stop displaying my position on the war in Ukraine in social media and promises to terminate the contract if I participate in active protests.

My study is connected to nature protection projects, including those in frame of FSC forest certification. Now this certification system collapses in Russia, together with all our monitoring sites and locally protected quarters. No certification = no protection, red-listed species and natural communities which we tried to protect last 15 years will be just destroyed very quickly. What else can I say? For me this all looks like apocalypse.

The Russian - German project XXXXX was canceled, so we could not implement our study on tracking of migratory birds. However, it was canceled by Russian side...