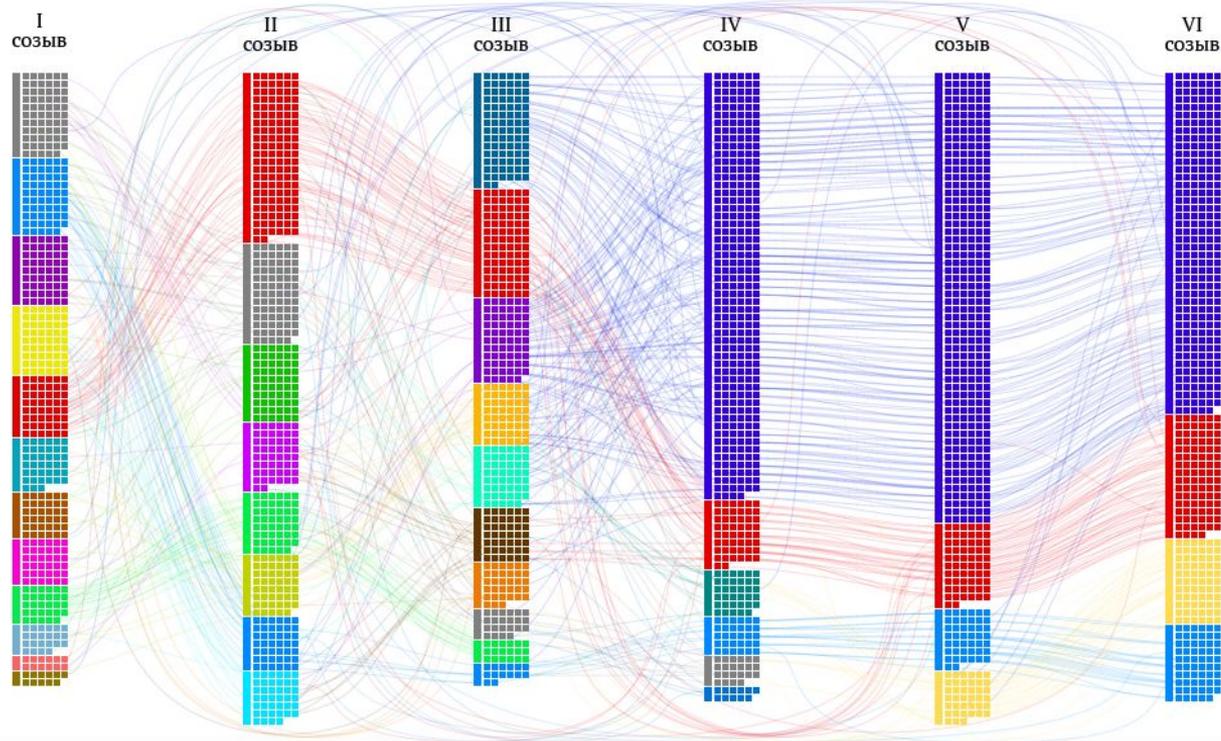


# **Russian State Duma elections: a turning point?**

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Ekaterina Sivyakova for Danish School of Journalism  
March 1, 2021

# Russian Duma: history overview



## Convocations:

- I - 1993-1995
- II - 1995-1999
- III - 1999-2003
- IV - 2003-2007
- V - 2007-2011
- VI - 2011-2016

*Blue:* United Russia  
*Red:* Communists  
*Yellow:* Fair Russia  
*Light Blue:* Liberal-Democrats

# 2011: request for change

## September 2011: “United Russia” party congress – “reshuffle”

(President Dmitry Medvedev claims that he would not run for President for the second term and will lead UR for the State Duma elections, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin says he would run for President for the third term)

## Fall 2011: Alexey Navalny’s campaign

Call for protest voting and independent observation on elections for the State Duma in December

# December 2011: after elections

4 December: State Duma elections  
(independent media and observers  
report mass fraud)

5 December: first protest rally on  
Chistiye Prudi in Moscow

February 2012: Pussy Riot performance at  
Christ the Saviour Cathedral in Moscow

February 2012: White Ring at Moscow

2011-2013: series of protest rallies in  
Russia



**“You don’t even imagine / represent us”**



# State Duma after protest rallies in 2010s and Crimea

Fractions	2007-2011	2011-2016	2016-2021
United Russia	70%	53%	
Communist Party Of Russia	12,7%	20%	
Fair Russia	8,5%	14%	
Liberal-Democrats	8,9%	12%	

# State Duma after protest rallies in 2010s and Crimea

Fractions	2007-2011	2011-2016	2016-2021*
United Russia	70%	53%	75,95%
Communist Party Of Russia	12,7%	20%	9,58%
Fair Russia	8,5%	14%	5,12%
Liberal-Democrats	8,9%	12%	8,91%

\*Not in fractions: 0,45%

# State Duma after protest rallies in 2010s and Crimea

Fractions	2007-2011	2011-2016	2016-2021*	2021-2026
United Russia	70%	53%	75,95%	?
Communist Party Of Russia	12,7%	20%	9,58%	?
Fair Russia	8,5%	14%	5,12%	?
Liberal-Democrats	8,9%	12%	8,91%	?

\*Not in fractions: 0,45%

# Social representation in the era of post truth



Evgeny Feldman for Meduza.io

# Informational autocrats

“In recent decades, dictatorships based on mass repression have largely given way to a new model based on the manipulation of information. Instead of terrorizing citizens into submission, "informational autocrats" artificially boost their popularity by convincing the public they are competent. To do so, they use propaganda and silence informed members of the elite by co-optation or censorship. Using several sources, including a newly created dataset on authoritarian control techniques, we document a range of trends in recent autocracies consistent with this new model: a decline in violence, efforts to conceal state repression, rejection of official ideologies, imitation of democracy, a perceptions gap between the masses and the elite, and the adoption by leaders of a rhetoric of performance rather than one aimed at inspiring fear”.

Sergei Guriev, Daniel Treisman. A Theory of Information Autocracy. 2019.

<https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/jep.33.4.100>

# Russian society in the age of post truth

Crimea and ideological polarization

Parallel agendas in media

Filter bubbles phenomenon

Emotional separation

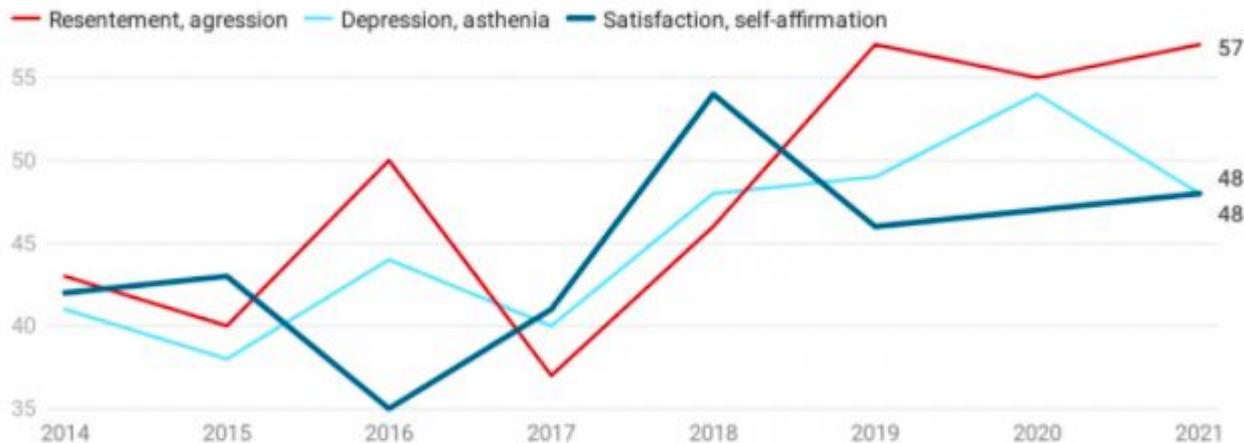


Evgeny Feldman for Meduza.io

# Russians' feelings

## What feelings do you think have grown stronger recently among people around you?

as %% of respondents



Levada-Center, @levada\_center

Source: <https://www.levada.ru/en/2021/02/16/russians-feelings/>

For the last several years Russians are more likely to notice an increase of aggression and resentment among people around them. In 2017 37% of respondents said so, while in 2021 the figure is 57%. Depressive asthenic moods are also noticed somewhat more frequently: 40% in 2017, 54% in 2020, and 48% in 2021. About half (48%) of respondents steadily see an increase in feelings of satisfaction and self-affirmation among those around them.

# Context of upcoming elections

Retirement-age increase in 2018 (extremely unpopular reform)

Pandemic conditions and economic crisis

Alexey Navalny in prison and frustration of creative class and youngsters

July 2020: Constitution amendments

- Voting lasted from June 25 till July 1 (7 days!)
- Citizens were able to vote online and offline

Source of photo: <https://www.rbc.ru/photoreport/25/06/2020/5ef49d9b9a7947c338601601?>



# Alexey Navalny's return to Russia

January 17: Navalny comes back to Russia, detained in the airport

January 19: release of Navalny's investigation "Palace for Putin"

January 23, 31: all-Russia protest rallies and "TikTok" consolidation of young Russians

Navalny's team: we will protest in other forms



# The film “Palace for Putin”: 113 mln views



Source <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipAnwilMncl>

# The film "Palace for Putin" and the changes (?)

## Have you heard about the recently released on the Internet film "Palace for Putin" made by Alexey Navalny and Anti-Corruption Foundation?

as %% of respondents



Levada-Center, @levada\_center  
Создано с помощью Datawrapper

## Have you heard about the recently released on the Internet film "Palace for Putin" made by Alexey Navalny and Anti-Corruption Foundation?

as %% of the respondents in 2017 and 2021



Levada-Center, @levada\_center

## Has your attitude towards Vladimir Putin changed after this film?

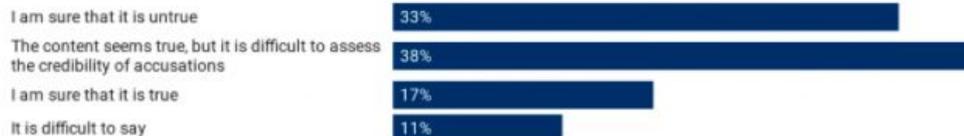
as %% of those who have seen the film, are familiar with its content or have heard something about it



Levada-Center, @levada\_center

## Do you think the content in this film is true?

as %% of those, who have seen the film, are familiar with its content or have heard something about it



Levada-Center, @levada\_center

# People in thirties go on streets, Gen Z protests online

Sociologists have been analyzing the age, educational status, and prosperity of Russian protesters since the 2011–2012 wave of rallies, and have found that **most protesters** in that period were in the twenty-five to thirty-nine age bracket, had a college education, and were reasonably well off, putting them in the middle class. Subsequent research showed that although schoolchildren and students were very active and noticeable at later protests, the core of protesters remained about the same age. Their main complaint remained the lack of change in Russia’s system of power.

Sociologists haven’t yet studied the massive protests that took place on January 23 [2021], though some **limited polling** of protesters in Moscow revealed that the core of the protest had changed little: it was still made up of people in their thirties. **What had changed, however, was that more than 40 percent of those polled said it was the first time they had ever taken part in a protest.** This is undoubtedly down to the impact of Navalny’s return to Russia following his poisoning with a deadly nerve agent, his subsequent arrest, and the release of his film about “Putin’s palace,” which has become a symbol of the establishment’s vulgar wealth and the enrichment of the elite.

*Andrei Kolesnikov. Russian Protest in The Age of Online Transparency*

<https://carnegie.ru/commentary/83724>

# Online protest of Gen Z

The main question: will online protest of young Russians convert into offline one?

And how state officials would react on it?

Source:

<https://meduza.io/en/feature/2021/02/21/behind-the-scenes-of-a-propaganda-campaign>

## Behind the scenes of a propaganda campaign

How Russian federal investigators are fighting Navalny's movement in classrooms and on social media

7:41 pm, February 21, 2021 - Source: [Meduza](https://meduza.io)



# “Navalny’s Effect” on media



## Navalny protests spark interest in independent media and NGOs

The last decade in Russia has seen the emergence of an entire infrastructure of independent media outlets that cover political protests and NGOs that help people detained during rallies and victims of police brutality. The Bell looked at how the current pro-Navalny demonstrations are allowing these projects to attract new audiences, and increase donations.

Source: <https://thebell.io/en/the-navalny-effect/>

# “Navalny’s Effect” on media in numbers

- The go-to media outlet for the pro-Navalny audience is Russia’s only independent TV news network, Dozhd, which streams live broadcasts from protests and court hearings. Dozhd founder Natalya Sindeyeva told The Bell that viewing numbers have risen from 1.3 million in June to 2.33 million today. In January and February alone, the network gained another 450,000 online followers and its videos attracted a total 190 million views. For comparison, the YouTube channel for the Russian-language version of state-owned RT attracted no more than 45,000 new subscribers in the same period. Dozhd makes most of its money from subscribers and donations and, since August, its YouTube channel has acquired 5,500 new sponsors who make a monthly contribution of up to \$10. In the same period, a similar number of people signed up for an \$80 annual subscription. In January, 10.2 million people visited Dozhd’s website – 2.6 times more than in December, and more than four times as many as January 2020.
- Media outlet Mediazona has been another beneficiary of the protests. Launched after the large opposition rallies in 2011 and 2012 by two members of punk band Pussy Riot, it specializes in court reporting and investigations of abuses of power by the security forces. It is funded by donations. Since the start of the Navalny protests, Mediazona has seen its number of financial contributors jump by a third and total monthly donations almost double to \$50,000. The authorities are taking Mediazona so seriously that editor-in-chief Sergei Smirnov was jailed for 15 days on trumped up charges.
- There are dozens of NGOs that offer support to protesters, but the best-known is OVD-Info, which verifies statistics about arrests, publishes lists of detainees and provides free legal aid. In the past three weeks, more than 11,000 people were detained in Russia, and OVD-Info’s Telegram channel, which offers legal advice, grew its audience to 170,000 people.
- Like Mediazona, OVD-Info relies on donations. There are no figures yet how much they have raised during the Navalny protests, but the number of donors is certain to have grown. In December 2020, OVD-Info raised \$50,000 from 7,207 donations.
- Source <https://thebell.io/en/the-navalny-effect/>

# The price for a freedom of speech

## Russian political scientist Ekaterina Schulmann raises more than \$45,000 for independent journalists and human rights activists

3:13 pm, February 23, 2021 · Source: [Ekaterina Schulmann](#)

During a mere two-hour video stream on YouTube this week, Russian political scientist Ekaterina Schulmann managed to collect more than 3.4 million rubles (about \$45,000) in donations for the independent news outlet *Mediazona* and the human rights projects *OVD-Info* and “Apologia Protest.”

In a [Facebook post](#) on Tuesday, Schulmann revealed that more than 4,400 people contributed money through the service “DonationAlerts,” with an average donation of 800 rubles (\$10). The single biggest contribution was 20,000 rubles (\$270).

Earlier this month, photojournalist Dmitry Markov [auctioned](#) a photograph he took after being arrested near Moscow’s City Court, featuring a masked riot police officer and a portrait of Vladimir Putin. The image sold for 2 million rubles (\$27,000), which Markov donated to *OVD-Info* and Apologia Protest.

Source: <https://meduza.io/en/news/2021/02/23/russian-political-scientist-ekaterina-schulmann-raises-more-than-45-000-for-independent-journalists-and-human-rights-activists>

# Media and politics in Russia: Clubhouse version

**‘I live in my own bubble’** Meeting on the app Clubhouse, one of Putin’s alleged daughters chats with the investigative reporter who exposed her ties to the Russian president

4:22 pm, February 17, 2021 · Source: [The Village](#)

Elon Musk may have failed to get Vladimir Putin into a chat room on Clubhouse, but one of the Russian president’s alleged daughters has joined the new social network. Late on Tuesday, Louiza Rozova spoke briefly to Andrey Zakharov, one of the journalists who recently outed her as Putin’s supposedly illegitimate daughter. In November 2020, Zakharov and others at Proekt released an investigative report revealing that a minority stake in the enormous Rossiya Bank belongs to a woman named Svetlana Krivonogikh, apparently received thanks to her intimate association with Russia’s president. Proekt also reported that Krivonogikh has a daughter named Louiza Rozova who “looks remarkably” like Putin. Based on a transcript reported by [The Village](#), Meduza summarizes Rozova’s Clubhouse broadcast on Tuesday night.

Source: <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2021/02/17/i-live-in-my-own-bubble>

# Media and politics in Russia: Clubhouse version

Zakharov then asked Rozova how she's handled the repercussions of being identified as one of Vladimir Putin's children. She thanked him for spicing up her life:

"I'd hit a rut in life. Things had stagnated. I'm very grateful that I got this opportunity — that I lit up like this and people saw my account [on Instagram]. I've never tried to be popular, but ... I'm feeling great, so don't you worry about me. [...] I don't follow politics at all. I'm busy with the things I like. You thought I'd delete my account? As if! I live my own life and I'm busy with fashion. It's not the center of my life, but I like it. I'm not going to stop doing everything I was doing because of your investigation. I'm still living the same life and talking to the same friends.

Before Zakharov was booted from the Clubhouse room, he managed to ask Rozova what she thinks about modern Russia. She apparently saw the question as a criticism of her sheltered life and responded accordingly:

"There's no one answer to any question... You're right that I live in my own little art-world. It's true that I live in my own bubble. I don't watch TV and sometimes I follow the news on Telegram channels, but not really. I watch fashion shows, I buy copies of *Vogue*, and I love to go to the nearby restaurant and eat tasty pasta, dishing with friends about the latest gossip and investigations."

Source: <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2021/02/17/i-live-in-my-own-bubble>

# New independent media

## Business media

- The Bell since 2017 ([thebell.io](http://thebell.io))
- VTimes since 2020 ([vtimes.io](http://vtimes.io))

The logo for VTimes, featuring the word "VTimes" in a bold, black, serif font. The letter "V" is significantly larger and more prominent than the other letters.The logo for THE BELL., featuring the words "THE BELL." in a bold, red, sans-serif font. The period at the end is a small dot.

## Investigative media:

- iStories since 2020 ([istories.media](http://istories.media))
- Project since 2018 ([proekt.media](http://proekt.media))

The logo for iSTORIES, featuring the word "iSTORIES" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The letter "i" is lowercase and smaller than the other letters, which are uppercase.The logo for проект., featuring the word "проект." in a white, sans-serif font on a blue rectangular background. The period at the end is a small dot.

*Independent media without censorship, operating via crowdfunding and advertisement; created by professional journalists; creating communities*

# The loud voice of independent media

**Sadreev:** When the variety of opinions in media is being reduced and [in public sphere] the position of state is starting to dominate, independent media seem to stand on the position of so called “information aggression” <...> Do you feel that “Vedomosti” as media that covers topics that others ignore, can meet this pattern?

**Lysova:** Of course, that threat exists. When the number of places, where you can talk, reduces, in others people start not to talk, but to scream. As an editor, I am trying to keep the balance.

*“Vedomosti” Ex-editor-in-chief Tatiana Lysova in interview with “Esquire” ex-editor-in-chief Igor Sadreev, 2014*

# Media demand to free Navalny

**Free Alexey Navalny!** Meduza responds to the imprisonment of Russia's most outspoken opposition politician

9:18 pm, February 2, 2021 · Source: Meduza · 🗒



Alexey Navalny has been sentenced to prison, as everyone expected. The Russian authorities did not even bother with the semblance of legality. The absurd allegations against this politician ended in a trial that was no less farcical. But the result is no joke: years behind bars.

The authorities are communicating their position directly and shamelessly: Oppositionists who reject the humiliating rules of the game have two options in this country: death or prison. Boris Nemtsov was killed. Alexey Navalny managed to survive, but he was immediately imprisoned once he returned home. This is all very bad news for Russians everywhere.

Navalny is the first person in a long time who has succeeded in challenging Russia's political monopoly and restoring some level of competition to the nation's politics, all without the basic opportunity to participate directly in elections. At the same time, and perhaps even more importantly, he gave people hope that changes were possible, at least in the future. Today, that hope is once again illusory.

Free Alexey Navalny!

Source <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2021/02/02/free-alexey-navalny>

# Resume

Political and civic protest goes in total online

Journalists are being persecuted for their professional activity (in law field -- by the “fakenews” law and “international agent” list)

Independent media gather together to hold and publish investigations, which allows them to wide the audience

Investigative journalism goes online as well: open data investigations

New solidarity:

- Citizens call for independent journalism and protection of journalists
- Journalists picket on streets fighting against injustice

Questions:

- How will the society react on the conflict between state propaganda and independent media? Which picture people will believe?
- What role will citizens and citizen journalists play?
- Will national elections to State Duma really represent Russian society? What vote turnout we will see?

# **Thank you!**

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