

The Impact of the 2022 Russian Invasion on Ukrainian Well-Being

Abstract

Since Russia's escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian War in February of 2022, there are few Ukrainians who have not been affected, whether it be experiencing the death of a loved one, losing one's home to missile strikes, or participating actively as a soldier in the conflict. We test the impact of the war on life satisfaction and hope (ranges: 0-10). Based on pre- and post-war data from representative samples of Ukrainians living in Ukraine (N = 4,035), our analyses reveal that though life satisfaction dropped significantly by 1.07 units (SE = 0.13, $p < 0.001$) since the escalation of the war, hope significantly increased by 1.00 unit (SE = 0.18, $p < 0.001$). We place these results in a global context using data from 69 countries, finding that the decrease in life satisfaction in Ukraine in 2022 was the 4th largest drop in the world, but Ukraine leads the world in the increase in hope. These findings reveal that though the war has resulted in Ukrainians' suffering on an unprecedented scale, Ukrainians display remarkable resilience by remaining hopeful for a better future. Our study calls for greater attention to examine wars and conflicts through a psychological lens.

Methods

Data Source:

Gallup World Poll. This dataset is an annual survey that covers over 90% of the global population for the years 2005-2022 across over 160 countries and territories. It uses stratified random sampling such that nearly all samples are probability-based and represent the national adult population, covering the whole country, including rural areas, with exceptions being areas with safety concerns, sparsely populated islands, and places accessible only by foot, animal, or small boat. These data are collected by conducting interviews with people aged 15 and over, either by phone or face-to-face. Telephone interviews typically take 30 minutes to complete while face-to-face interviews take 60 minutes. In each country or territory, Gallup interviews 1,000 people or more per year, though in rare cases they may interview as few as 500 people (Gallup, 2021b, 2023b).

Life satisfaction survey question:

"Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. Suppose we say that the top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you, and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time, assuming that the higher the step the better you feel about your life, and the lower the step the worse you feel about it? Which step comes closest to the way you feel?"

Hope survey:

"Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. Suppose we say that the top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you, and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. Just your best guess, on which step do you think you will stand on in the future, say about five years from now?"

Detailed Results

Ukrainian Well-Being:

- Life satisfaction significantly decreased by 1.07 units (SE = 0.13, $p < .001$)
- Hope significantly increased by 1.00 unit (SE = 0.18, $p < .001$)

Table 1

Average (SD) Life Satisfaction in Ukraine by Year

Variable	2019	2020	2021	2022
Life Satisfaction	4.70 (2.18)	5.27 (2.41)	5.31 (2.23)	4.64 (2.37)
Hope (life satisfaction 5 years from now)	5.65 (2.64)	6.49 (3.25)	6.34 (3.19)	7.85 (2.42)

Note. Both measures are rated from 0 (worst possible) to 10 (best possible). Standard deviations are in parentheses.

Table 2
Changes in Life Satisfaction for Ukrainians from 2019 to 2022

<i>Predictors</i>	Life Satisfaction			Hope		
	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	4.78	4.66 – 4.91	< .001	5.79	5.62 – 5.97	< .001
Year	.31	.21 – .41	< .001	.35	.22 – .49	< .001
Event [1 = 2022]	-1.07	-1.33 – -.81	< .001	1.00	.65 – 1.36	< .001
Observations	4035			3401		
R ² / R ² adjusted	0.007 / 0.007			0.061 / 0.061		

Note. On average about 15% of participants answer “Don’t know” to the question on Hope while only 1% of participants answer “Don’t know” to their Life Satisfaction.

Russian Well-Being:

- Life satisfaction significantly increased by 0.57 units (*SE* = 0.09, *p* < 0.001)
- Hope significantly increased by 0.57 units (*SE* = 0.12, *p* < 0.001)

Table 3
Average (SD) Life Satisfaction in Russia by Year

<i>Variable</i>	2019	2020	2021	2022
Life Satisfaction	5.44 (2.28)	5.49 (2.25)	5.44 (2.29)	6.04 (2.08)
Hope (life satisfaction 5 years from now)	6.39 (2.79)	6.52 (2.86)	6.31 (3.04)	6.92 (2.55)

Note. Both measures are rated from 0 (worst possible) to 10 (best possible). Standard deviations are in parentheses.

Table 4
Changes in Life Satisfaction for Russians from 2019 to 2022

<i>Predictors</i>	Life Satisfaction			Hope		
	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	5.45	5.38 – 5.53	< .001	6.43	6.33 – 6.53	< .001
Year	0.01	-0.06 – 0.07	.833	-0.03	-0.11 – 0.06	.511
Event [1 = 2022]	0.57	0.40 – 0.75	< .001	0.57	0.34 – 0.80	< .001
Observations	8914			8188		
R ² / R ² adjusted	0.012 / 0.011			0.006 / 0.005		

Global Opinion Change Highlights

Countries with most negative change:

- Costa Rica (-44.14%)
- Bolivia (-42.93%)
- Peru (-41.7%)

Countries that support Ukraine experienced negative change:

- United Kingdom (-19.5%)
- Germany (-16.5%)
- United States (-12.5%)

Countries that report positive change:

- Bangladesh: (+7.61%)
- Algeria (+4.47%)
- Tunisia (+4.17%)
- India (+4.12%)
- Afghanistan (+2.58%)
- Mali (+1.14%)
- Benin (+1.0%)