

Deep Russia: APPLE OF DISCORD

What Russians discussed on "VKontakte" and "Telegram" from 10 to 16 August

Period	10 - 16 August 2026
Platforms	VKontakte, Telegram (regional communities)



Key Findings

The removal of "Yabloko" from the elections became a noticeable topic in the regional information space and provoked a fairly polarized reaction. Part of the audience perceived it as a display of the authorities' weakness on the eve of the elections, another part as the natural punishment of a party it considers marginal. However, for the majority it became yet another confirmation that there is no real competition in the elections and that inconvenient participants are removed in advance. Hence the typical formulations about "elections without a choice", the authorities' fear of competitors, especially those with an anti-war agenda, and a predetermined result.

The officially announced grounds for removing the party were mocked over the very "scale" of the claims, which were considered disproportionate. Users compared these sums with the far larger volumes of funds that, in their view, are connected with the activities of the ruling party itself. Tellingly, such sarcasm occurred even among those who generally supported the court's decision.

The published investigation into the foreign funding of all parliamentary parties was perceived as an example of double standards. For part of the audience, the main thing was not who is formally right in court, but that identical or similar claims against different parties are, in their view, assessed differently by the system.

Pro-government regional channels almost simultaneously spread discrediting materials about people connected with "Yabloko". An organized campaign in the comments was also noticeable, in which bots promoted narratives about "foreign funding" and "working in the interests of the West". Users reacted sarcastically, suggesting that such commenters go to the front themselves. Also, in the regions, administrators of public groups deleted critical comments and even the news about the removal itself.

The "Yabloko" party had not been popular or widely discussed before. In a number of regions people discussed that they had not been particularly interested in "Yabloko" before, but after its removal they were **ready to support the party precisely as an alternative to "United Russia" and to show their anti-war position.**

The election campaign itself has so far not generated much interest: the dominant belief is that the result has been determined in advance and that a "United Russia" victory does not depend on the real expression of the popular will.

The fuel crisis, which had continued in the previous weeks as well, entered a new phase during the reporting period. In terms of reach, this topic again became one of the largest. Reactions were dominated by irritation over hours-long queues, lost time and the impossibility of refuelling normally. Suspicions spread that the shortage may be being maintained artificially in order to create grounds for further price increases.

1. APPLE OF DISCORD

Chronology of the removal of the "Yabloko" party from the 2026 elections

In June–July 2026, "Yabloko" entered the campaign with an extremely short and politically recognizable platform **"For Peace and Freedom"**: a ceasefire, diplomacy, preventing nuclear war, freedom from fear and from political repression. [Nikolai Rybakov at the congress on 27 June](#) effectively saw in the elections an opportunity for the people to say "no" to the continuation of the war by legal means, and [Grigory Yavlinsky in a conversation on 27 July](#) said that a vote for "Yabloko" would be a political message to the authorities about the need for a ceasefire.

On 29 July the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation unanimously [registered the federal list of "Yabloko"](#). At that stage the electoral administration itself found no grounds for refusal. After the draw, the party received the second line on the ballot, immediately after "United Russia". Over the course of the campaign the party's electoral potential was growing. Open data [VTsIOM](#) in March 2026 indicated 15% of respondents who "in principle allow" voting for "Yabloko". In June [Radio Liberty](#) and [Meduza](#) already cited 18% who allowed for themselves the possibility of voting for "Yabloko".

On 5–6 August a synchronized political attack by the systemic parties began. [Zyuganov, Mironov, Zhuravlyov and Slutsky](#) criticized "Yabloko" for its position on the war: the Communist Party of the Russian Federation demanded loyalty to the "course toward victory", "A Just Russia" called for an inspection by the Ministry of Justice and the prosecutor's office, and the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia promoted the idea of declaring the party undesirable. On 7 August "Rodina" filed with the Supreme Court [an administrative claim to annul the registration of the federal list](#). On 10 August, Judge Vyacheslav Kirillov of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation granted "Rodina's" claim and annulled the registration of the federal list of "Yabloko". In the official [statement of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation of 10 August](#) the grounds for this decision were copyright violations in campaign materials, donations from persons who had previously received funds from abroad, and the distribution of materials in support of the party via foreign platforms.

On 17 August the Appeals Board of the Supreme Court upheld the decision; this is recorded both in the [Supreme Court case file](#), and in the report by [RBC on the appeal](#). "Yabloko" announced its intention to file a supervisory appeal with the Presidium of the Supreme Court, which was confirmed by the [party press service](#). On 18 August the Central Election Commission [removed line No. 2 from the ballot](#), leaving the numbering of the other parties unchanged.

Main discussions

The removal of "Yabloko" from the elections became a noticeable topic in the regional information space and provoked a fairly polarized reaction. Part of the audience perceived it as a display of the authorities' weakness on the eve of the elections, another part as the natural punishment of a party it considers marginal.

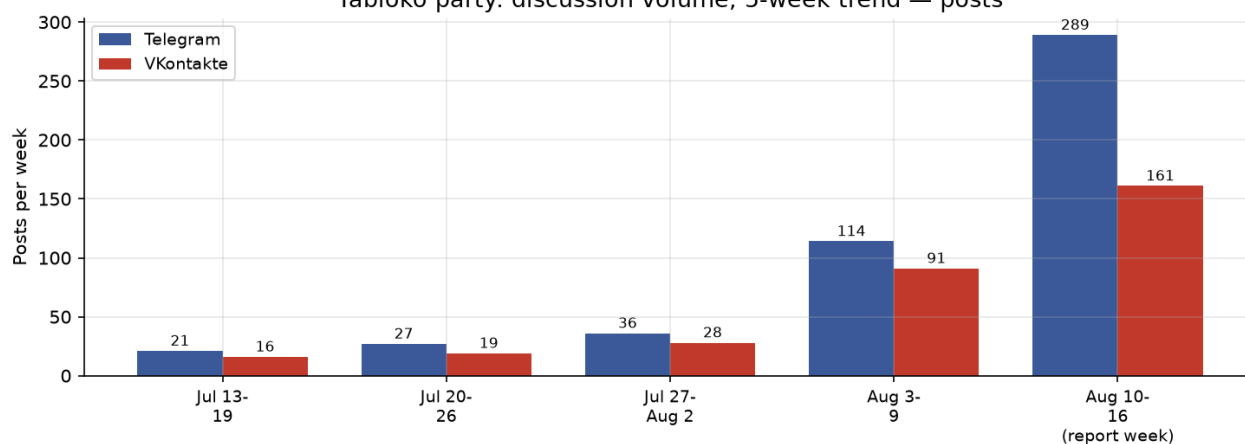
Tatarstan

"They swept the strong ones aside right away" — August 10 at 20:22, ♥22

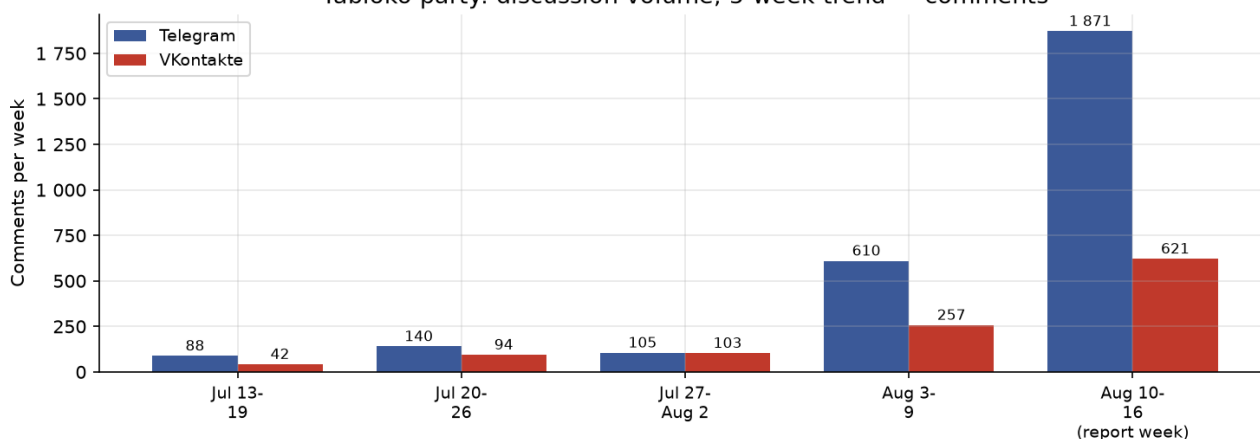
↳ *"Salavat, what is their strength — sitting on the State Department's teat, pushing Western and LGBT values???" — August 10 at 21:19, ♥1*

↳ *"Exorcist, so it does not bother you that United Russia deputies have dual citizenship, that they have real estate over there and their children with their families?" — August 10 at 21:29, ♥27*

Yabloko party: discussion volume, 5-week trend — posts



Yabloko party: discussion volume, 5-week trend — comments



Over the week, posts on this topic on Telegram collected about 185,000 reactions. The most frequently used were 🤖 — 22%, 🤡 — 20% and 🙄 — 19%. At the same time, the emoji themselves do not make it possible to determine unambiguously whom the negativity is directed against. The comments show that some users mocked and criticized "Yabloko", while others criticized the court's decision. However, in the comments, for the majority this became yet another confirmation that there is no real competition in the elections and that inconvenient participants are removed in advance. Hence the typical

formulations about "elections without a choice", the authorities' fear of competitors, especially those with an anti-war agenda, and a predetermined result.

Novosibirsk Oblast

"How the system fears for itself. If everyone supports Putin and United Russia so much, then why are they so afraid of the only opposition party? Only obscenities come to mind"

— August 11 at 8:42, ♥48

The most emotional reaction was in Samara Oblast, where the topic held the information space for the entire week and was accompanied by lengthy, clearly non-bot comments about "Yabloko" as the only party that had advocated bringing "fathers and sons from the special operation" back home. In the Republic of Tatarstan, the party's removal provoked uncharacteristically active discussion, in which some users admitted that they had been going to vote for "Yabloko" and now do not know whom to vote for. A readiness to defend a party toward which there had previously been no sympathy, simply because it remained the only alternative, was also observed in Leningrad Oblast.

Tolyatti

"It apparently dawned on the slow-witted that if Yabloko takes part in the elections officially, then against that background they themselves would look like complete cannibals with their pro-war position. As expected." — August 10 at 22:54, ♥66

The officially announced grounds for removing the party — 16,900 rubles of "foreign funding", as well as the use in campaign materials of copyrights to songs and of images created via ChatGPT — rarely became the subject of substantive dispute. In the comments, people far more often mocked the very scale of the claims, considering them disproportionate. Users compared these sums with the far larger volumes of funds that, in their view, are connected with the activities of the ruling party itself. Tellingly, such sarcasm occurred even among those who generally supported the court's decision.

Tolyatti (attacking United Russia)

"Maybe the Supreme Court will explain why it is precisely United Russia that coerces and pressures voters in many cities during elections? This is especially clearly visible in the administration, in schools and other educational institutions, and in medical organizations."

Employees are threatened with disciplinary sanctions: depriv..." — August 10 at 22:29, ♥143

Altai Krai

"I am not surprised, and only united russia is the most honest party, with no violations"
— August 10 at 21:32, ♥74

↳ *"Usa, are you going to vote for the socialists in the autumn? How radical leftists are taking over the Democratic Party? Are you following that? It is quite something"* —
August 10 at 21:59

↳ *"Seryoga, and who else was left? All of them United Russia's puppets?"* — August 11 at
3:36, ♥13

Yamal

"united russia does not need foreign funding — it steals quite enough at home." — August 11 at 12:45, ♥16

Danilin's statement about a possible ban on "Yabloko" as an extremist organization was met rather ironically. Even among supporters of the authorities, the most frequent question was why one should fear a party with a rating of 1–2% at all.

Altai Krai

"Yabloko is a micro-party anyway — a few people running around pretending to be the opposition!!! They squandered their voters and lost their seats in the State Duma... I do not understand at all what this is about!!!????!! 🙄🙄" — August 10 at 22:02, ♥5

↳ *"Aleksey, and the fact that this micro-party beat united russia in a poll in this public group — that is nonsense, right?" — August 11 at 3:53, ♥31*

↳ *"Aleksey, they would not have removed a micro-party" — August 11 at 5:08, ♥1*

The published investigation into the foreign funding of all parliamentary parties was perceived in the comments as an example of double standards. For part of the audience, the main thing was not who is formally right in court, but that identical or similar claims against different parties are, in their view, assessed differently by the system.

Krasnoyarsk Krai

"First they decided to play at democracy and let in a party with an anti-war position, but apparently they realized that with such a position Yabloko would gather a substantial number of votes. You can fudge anything, but they did not want to take the risk and in the end removed it altogether)" — August 11 at 8:04, ♥3

↳ *"Tigran, what does the slogan about the Special Military Operation have to do with it, when Yabloko was removed because of obvious foreign influence" — August 11 at 11:23*

Rostov

"Changes are only possible after the ballet 'Swan Lake' on all channels..." — August 10 at 21:32, ♥75

↳ *"Nikolai, there is not much point anymore. There is nothing left to save. For all 30 years everything was moved out to 'unfriendly countries', which have now confiscated what was stolen. There is no domestic production in many sectors. There is no car industry. There is no machinery. Machine building was sold off for scrap or runs on Chinese components." — August 10 at 23:11, ♥21*

Pro-government regional channels almost simultaneously spread discrediting materials about people connected with "Yabloko". Among them were Boris Tseitlin, a former member of the audit commission of the party's Moscow Oblast branch, who published a photo in the uniform of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and blogger Vladislav Milokhin, who publicly supported the party. Part of the audience perceived the uniformity and simultaneity of such publications as a sign of a commissioned campaign against "Yabloko". An organized campaign in the comments was also noticeable, in which bots promoted narratives about "foreign funding" and "working in the interests of the West". Users reacted sarcastically, suggesting that such commenters go to the front themselves. Also, in

the regions, administrators of public groups deleted critical comments and even the news about the removal itself. In particular, in Bashkortostan, St. Petersburg, and Volgograd, Pskov and Nizhny Novgorod Oblasts.

Volgograd

"A pile of donkeys and bots in the comments who only support the united russia scum." — August 11 at 9:08, ♥8

Rostov

"Not a fan of Yabloko at all, never was for them, but this all goes to show that 1) all the current parties in the State Duma are branches of United Russia, 2) the old men will never let any real opposition into the elections. They are too afraid for their power" — August 10 at 20:15, ♥92

↳ *"Konstantin, but at the same time I would like to note that Yabloko rule, unfortunately, is no different from United Russia. I lived in Leningrad Oblast, where the mayor is from Yabloko — absolutely all the same" — August 10 at 21:02, ♥4*

↳ *"Marina, I am telling you, I am not for Yabloko at all, it just goes to show that all the parties are branches of united russia" — August 10 at 21:06, ♥2*

↳ *"Konstantin, here I agree with you, I would say that 'Yabloko' is no exception either. Just another bit of commotion to hide various problems behind"*

Yamal

"Previously such parties in Russia were used as stage decorations. Now the need for decorations has disappeared. The authorities are discarding the decorations and completing the construction of an Orthodox Iran on their territory. And those who now think that all this can be stopped by peaceful means are very naive." — August 11 at 22:27, ♥1

The "Yabloko" party had not been popular or widely discussed before all these events with the removal. In a number of regions people discussed that they had not been particularly interested in "Yabloko" before, but after its removal they were ready to support the party precisely as an alternative to "United Russia" and to show their anti-war position. Some users expressed a readiness to support candidates financially and to join in fundraising. There were also those who were skeptical about the prospects, proceeding from the expectation that the party itself could be declared extremist in the near future.

Rostov

"contain signs of extremism because of calls for peace, since under current conditions they effectively mean support for a 'Nazi regime'. What?? So a call for peace is 'support' for Nazism, and not saving the lives of young lads.." — August 10 at 20:04, ♥253

↳ *"Sergey, there was something like that in Orwell 🕶️" — August 10 at 20:06, ♥50*

General background of conversations about the elections and expectations

Interest in the elections themselves remains low. People talk about them mainly when specific news appears about candidates, party advertising or the latest campaign promises. The most widespread expectation concerns "United Russia", which "will win anyway", regardless of how people vote. In different regions the same phrases are repeated about "everything already being decided", "nothing will change", votes not mattering, and the elections themselves being rather a formality. Hence the unwillingness to go and vote, the indifference and the feeling that it is impossible to influence the result.

Yaroslavl

"What closeness are we talking about? No Ivan Ivanovich who knows how ordinary people live will come to power, and going against the system costs you dearly, so anyone 'close' will become distant immediately after being elected. What nonsense... Whether you elect or appoint — it is all the same, this is a person far removed from the realities of ordinary life." — August 11 at 16:01, ♥39

In some regions the unwillingness to discuss the elections is connected with fear of the consequences. In the Republic of Buryatia people "do not talk about the elections at all, they are afraid to write about such things". In the Republic of Bashkortostan, where there are many families of mobilized men, people speak "cautiously", since comments under the relevant posts are regularly purged. In Nizhny Novgorod and Kaliningrad Oblasts the situation is described similarly: there is discussion, but it is more restrained than in other regions, "because comments are purged and accounts are blocked".

However, certain regions stand out where part of the audience nevertheless does not give up on taking part. In Perm Krai people are actively discussing local candidates, are interested in the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia and, unlike in most other regions, part of the audience expresses a belief that "their vote will change something". In Leningrad and Chelyabinsk Oblasts, alongside the conviction that the elections are a farce, there are also calls to come out and vote anyway, in order at least to try to influence the situation.

Perm

"They also threatened the Communist Party of the Russian Federation with getting rid of all sorts of Bondarenkos, because everything has to be united Russia only. Just great here, north Korea is no longer a joke." — August 18 at 11:36, ♥4

The moderation of political discussions deserves separate mention. Comments inconvenient for the authorities are deleted and discussions are closed.

There is advertising activity by parties presented as alternatives to "United Russia", which are themselves not perceived as real opposition. In Kursk and Yaroslavl Oblasts, advertising by the "New People" party is noticeable; it distributes aid to those affected by shelling and demands the return of mayoral elections in Yaroslavl Oblast, which receives

audience support. In Lipetsk Oblast "A Just Russia" is advertised, but users perceive it as just the same "lackeys of the United Russia members" as all the rest.

Lipetsk about "A Just Russia"

"This party exists to split the voters' votes... If you vote for it, you are effectively voting for United Russia.... Look at which laws this party has voted for in the past" — August 11 at 18:26, ♥3

↳ *"Sergey, they have already decided everything without the people. They just launder money every year" — August 11 at 22:08*

In many regions the elections simply lose the competition for attention to other topics. In Moscow Oblast the main subject of concern remains security because of strikes on the Moscow region. In Temporarily Occupied Crimea the elections are "not a priority at all" against the background of the absence of electricity, water and fuel. In the Republic of Dagestan the audience is following the election of the acting head of the region more closely.

General observations

- The removal of "Yabloko" only confirmed in the public eye the non-competitiveness of the elections. The decision became a demonstration that the authorities are ready to remove even a weak alternative, especially if it holds an anti-war position.
- The election campaign itself has so far not generated much interest: the dominant belief is that the result has been determined in advance and that a "United Russia" victory does not depend on the real expression of the popular will.

2. The week in Russian regional "VKontakte" and "Telegram"

Top discussions on Telegram and VKontakte

Unmanned Aerial Vehicle attack on Nizhnekamsk

The week began with one of the largest-scale attacks on Tatarstan in the entire time of the "special operation". Drones attacked industrial facilities in Nizhnekamsk. More than 85 people were injured, and so a period of mourning was declared in the republic. The event spread far beyond Tatarstan, to more than 60 regions. In total the publications collected more than 3,200 comments. A significant part of the information background consisted of regional posts with condolences from neighbouring oblasts — "Kuzbass is with Nizhnekamsk", "Nizhny Novgorod Oblast offers its condolences".

A commenter from Belgorod in a Moscow-based group

"Condolences to Tatarstan.

We in Belgorod know what that is like.

A question for the admins - why are you silent about our tragedy?

On the night before Sunday 6 people died in Belgorod" — August 10 at 19:38, ♥254

↳ *"Pavel, my condolences to your fellow countrymen. A very good city and good people, you have been living in such conditions for so long. Ours is only beginning." — August 10 at 21:29, ♥66*

↳ *"Pavel, they are afraid to cover it. Belgorod has already 'gotten used' to such news, unfortunately it is not rare here, but there they will not manage to keep quiet.. And so we live" — August 10 at 21:31, ♥29*

The most widespread reaction was sincere condolences and war fatigue. The comments frequently voiced "when will this finally end", as well as questions about why, after years of war, strikes take the lives of civilians while the war does not touch the authorities.

Tatarstan *sarcastically mocking the authorities' priorities in allocating the budget to something other than the population's safety*

"🙄

Many thanks to the MOG group

You did everything you could 🙏

Cancel all the holidays, we do not need parties or fireworks.

Let the money work to protect the city and the industrial zone." — August 10 at 8:35, ♥751

Omsk

"Since 22 February 2022, how many people have already died, both military and civilian? And in all that time while the special military operation has been going on, has even one deputy of the State Duma of the Russian Federation been hurt???? NO" —

August 10 at 21:07, ♥30

A noticeable line of discussion was formed by criticism of the federal leadership. Some commenters accused Putin of being unable to protect the population or to end the war, using harsh formulations about him, for example "political impotent".

Kemerovo Oblast

"Do you know what the most terrible thing is? That this is already business as usual, it happens every day, but the bunker man likes the action! He gets bored, after all! And he does not feel sorry for people at all! Neither his own people nor the neighbouring ones! I am so sorry that this is happening! People died there! They are someone's relatives and loved ones! They could have been our friends... We mourn together with you, people of Nizhnekamsk, patience and strength to get through such grief..." — August 10 at 14:46,

♥187

Less numerous but distinct was the radical reaction. Such comments voiced demands for a harsh "response" and for "blood for blood".

Kemerovo Oblast

"Do they not have the guts to wipe all of ukraine off the face of the earth, or will there be nowhere left to pump money into their pockets from, or is there nothing to bomb it with, have the Soviet stocks run out?" — August 10 at 13:54, ♥2

Separately, a line of sincere gratitude to the regional leadership of Tatarstan for its personal presence at the scene could be traced in the discussion, since people had expected it to "stay silent".

Attack on the Moscow region and destruction of a Wildberries warehouse

During the week, drone attacks on the Moscow region also caused a large-scale fire at the largest Wildberries logistics warehouse, in the "Koledino" industrial park in Podolsk. The area of the facility exceeded 200,000 square metres. This was not the first strike on Wildberries infrastructure that week. A warehouse of the company in Voronezh Oblast also burned.

Audience reactions were dominated by fatigue and fatalism. The formula "everything is going according to plan" was again used sarcastically about yet another large-scale attack and increasingly reflected a habituation to such events having become the norm.

Tatarstan

"Every day we are told that they have bombed Armed Forces of Ukraine warehouses, drone manufacturers and so on and so forth. And yet the strikes only grow more numerous by the day. What would once have been a national catastrophe and would have been discussed for a month is now an ordinary daily news item less than a line long." — August 16 at 14:57, ♥18

↳ *"The enemy sits in the Kremlin, or mostly hides away in bunkers." — August 16 at 17:25,*

♥12

Commenters discussed why this chain is systematically hit by attacks, while Ozon and other large marketplaces supposedly remain untouched.

Samara

"Wildberries is apparently finished. And thousands of people are now out of work." — August 16 at 8:24, ♥45

Another noticeable thread concerned the company's own behaviour after the fires. Users complained that they had received burnt or soaked goods. Some commenters also accused Wildberries of trying to shift the losses onto insurance payouts instead of fully compensating sellers for their losses.

Another wave of fuel shortages

The fuel crisis, which had continued in the previous weeks as well, entered a new phase during the reporting period. Despite the fact that in the Altai Republic and Kalmykia, on the contrary, the restrictions were eased — to 50 litres of petrol per day — in Ryazan the local authorities started talking about a "second wave of fuel shortages", and in Smolensk queues at petrol stations stretched to almost five hours. In Voronezh Oblast, Governor Gusev admitted that the situation with petrol had worsened and that no rapid improvement is expected. In Penza, AI-95 disappeared completely at some filling stations.

Lipetsk

"Let him come to the village of Dobroye at 5 in the morning and stay until about 9, and see the real situation." — August 14 at 18:47, ♥13

The regions reacted to the shortage in different ways. In a number of regions the "even/odd" scheme was reintroduced, under which you can fill up your car depending on the last digit of your licence plate. In Tambov Oblast this system created problems for transit drivers: at filling stations they could simply be refused because of the "wrong" digit on their plate.

Kaluga

"And what are you supposed to do if a person needs petrol to go somewhere today, and his plates do not fit the even-odd rule? What kind of rubbish are they introducing" — August 14 at 5:18, ♥1

During the week the first consignment of petrol from India arrived in Russia. Among the audience this news provoked scepticism rather than relief. Commenters perceived the very fact of fuel imports as indirect confirmation that the shortage had taken on a serious scale.

Perm

"The biggest oil country of all, and where is the petrol 🇷🇺??? 🙄🙄🙄" — August 16 at 12:13, ♥28

In terms of reach, the fuel topic again became one of the largest and spread across 81 regions. In total the publications collected almost 11,800 comments.

Reactions were dominated by everyday irritation. The public complained about hours-long queues, lost time and the impossibility of refuelling normally. In parallel, suspicions

spread that the shortage may be being maintained artificially in order to create grounds for further price increases.

Lipetsk

"Petrol goes up in price even when there is none." — August 16 at 19:59, ♥8

A separate line was distrust of the authorities' promises to stabilize the situation quickly. Commenters recalled previous statements that the problem would be resolved "in the coming days", which never came true. Because of this, every new assurance of a quick improvement is perceived sceptically.

Samara

"At this rate, in a year the residents of a superpower will be interested in only one question — where to buy cheap oats for a horse." — August 13 at 13:57, ♥166

Putin's trip around Siberia and the Far East

Vladimir Putin visited several regions of Siberia and the Far East at once. In particular, in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk Putin attended Pacific Fleet exercises, appearing in naval uniform.

In the comments, the most discussed subject was the inconvenience this visit created for local residents. In Novosibirsk, roads closed off for the entire day caused outrage. A story also spread about children who were allegedly asked to hide in a ditch as the presidential motorcade approached.

Novosibirsk Oblast

"Oh Lord, fancy having to bring the whole city to a standstill in traffic jams because of one pensioner 🧓" — August 11 at 16:54, ♥112

↳ *"Viktor, you have been standing like that your whole life, do not whine" — August 11 at 16:57, ♥93*

People reacted sarcastically to Putin's "spontaneous" meetings with local residents. They considered them arranged in advance and wrote that people had been specially bussed in and positioned along the route.

Novosibirsk Oblast

"Did they at least throw their underwear into the old man's car for an autograph? What a herd."

Up until 2022 I could still somehow minimally understand the love for the old men and for the country's authorities, but after 2022 and everything else, given where the country has ended up, its economy, the value of a man's life and people's future in such darkness — it is simply impossible to understand all these fans of gerontocracy in the country" — August 11 at 13:00, ♥43

At the same time there was also a positive reaction. Along the lines that at least before his arrival the local authorities are forced to put things in order quickly. Part of the audience thanked him for the very fact of the president's visit, emphasizing that he had not visited their region for a long time.

Losses in the "Special Military Operation"

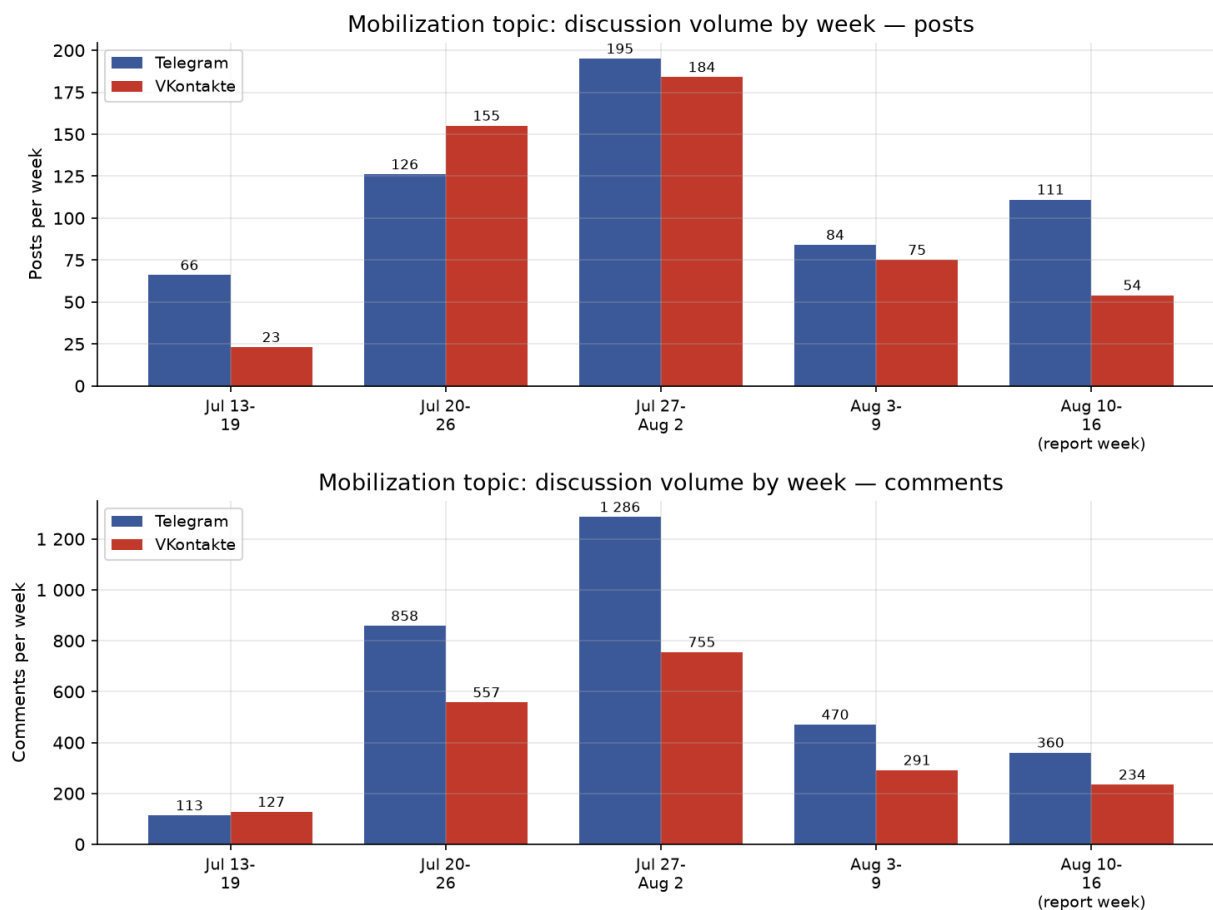
Regional public groups continued to publish obituaries for those killed in the war. This is rather a constant information background, not tied to any single event. Individual obituaries had hundreds of thousands of views and thousands of reactions.

The overwhelming majority of comments are traditional words of condolence: "eternal memory", "may they rest in heaven". Within this flow, questions about the very scale of the losses also regularly appear. The most frequent question is "how many more have to die". Separately, there were conflicts over exactly how the authorities honour the fallen. Thus, in the Jewish Autonomous Oblast, some commenters accused the region's leadership of "putting on a show" over a large-scale farewell ceremony for one serviceman, pointing out that other fallen soldiers are not honoured as publicly.

"There will be no mobilization"

During the week, news spread from The Guardian that the Kremlin currently prefers to increase contracts with the Ministry of Defense rather than launch a new wave of mobilization; in parallel, rumours were discussed about the possible deployment of an additional 50,000 North Korean troops to Kursk, Bryansk and Belgorod Oblasts.

The reaction in the comments was mostly distrustful. The mobilization topic, which had been falling sharply just a week ago, began to grow. The audience continues not to believe official assurances.



In Rostov and Oryol Oblasts and in Tatarstan, commenters unanimously recall previous promises that did not come true.

Novosibirsk Oblast

"He said something similar about the pension reform too... And about the first mobilization, and about a lot of other things..." — August 15 at 16:21, ♥68

In a number of regions people write that the state is preparing not to repeat the mistakes of the last wave of mobilization, and is not going to give it up.

Tolyatti

"The leaks claiming that there supposedly will not be any mobilization are made only so as not to raise panic ahead of time and so that people do not clear out of the country ahead of time." — August 16 at 13:00, ♥9

Methodology

What this project is. Systematic monitoring of sentiment in Russian regions — with a focus on critical and negative posts as an indicator of what irritates, frightens or outrages people. The conclusions rest on two parallel sources from monitoring regional VKontakte groups and Telegram.

VKontakte and Telegram. Automated data collection in regional Russian communities on VKontakte (536 groups) and Telegram (428 channels) — regional news channels, local public groups, oblast media, local "chat bots" with audiences ranging from several thousand to hundreds of thousands of subscribers. Coverage — all Russian regions and the occupied territories of Ukraine. Observations by regional analysts were used in addition.

Quotes in the report text are given verbatim.