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Research Report

Sanctions on Russia, Aid to Ukraine, and Energy for Germany

ECONtribute Policy Brief, No. 031 (English Version)

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Policy Brief No. 031
English Version

Sanctions on Russia, Aid to Ukraine, and Energy for Germany

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Universität zu Köln

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March 2022

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Sanctions on Russia, Aid to Ukraine, and Energy for Germany

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Executive Summary

Broad public support for strategies to reduce German energy dependence on Russia

According to a representative briq survey, more than two-thirds of the German population would support a halt to energy imports from Russia in order to increase pressure on the Russian government. A broad majority would also welcome additional measures to reduce energy dependence, including alternative energy sources and energy-saving. When it comes to helping the Ukrainian people, many of the respondents would support both aid and integration policies, including permanent residence and work permits for refugees. Germans are divided, however, on the question of further arms deliveries to Ukraine.

Roughly 70 percent of the 2,000 respondents said they would support an embargo on Russian gas, oil and coal. Three out of four Germans are in favor of seizing assets from people close to Putin to mitigate the economic impact of the sanctions on Germany. Around 90 percent are in favor of accelerating the expansion of renewable energies. During the transition phase, three-quarters of Germans would accept an extended operation of Germany's last remaining nuclear power plants, and 63 percent would accept postponing the coal phase-out.

Most Germans would also support other measures to reduce fuel consumption: 61 percent of respondents would accept a temporary speed limit of 100 km/h on German freeways; 52 percent would be in favor of reintroducing "car-free" Sundays. Four out of five Germans could also imagine extending the working-from-home mandate.

Only half of respondents, however, would agree to deliver more arms to Ukraine. Around 56 percent would be in favor of more political support for Ukraine's accession to the EU. Seven out of ten Germans would consider granting Ukrainian refugees permanent residence and work permits to facilitate their integration.

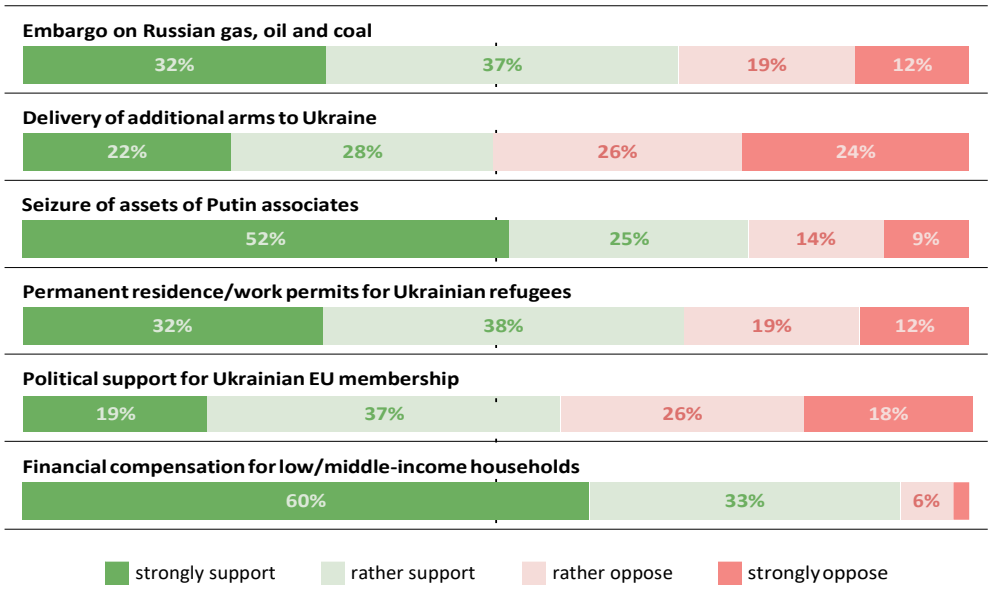
Results

Support for political sanctions and aid

The German government has been implementing various measures to put more pressure on Russia, help the people in Ukraine, and limit the burden on the domestic economy. Which policy measures enjoy broad public support in Germany, and which ones are less popular?

To answer this question, we administered a survey to a representative sample of 2,000 German adults. We elicited attitudes on a four-point Likert scale from "strongly support" to "strongly oppose" (see figure 1).

Fig. 1: Public support for policies to sanction Russia and help Ukraine



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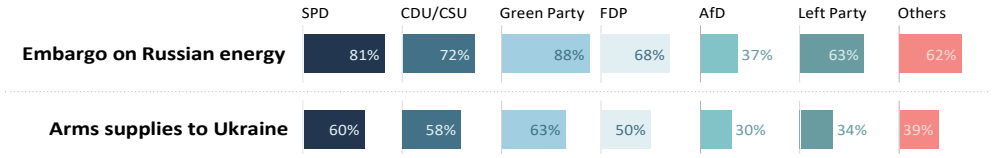
A majority of 69% would support an embargo on Russian energy, with 32% stating strong support. Only half of the respondents would agree to deliver more arms to Ukraine. A large majority of Germans (77%) are in favor of seizing assets from people close to Putin to mitigate the economic impact of the sanctions on Ger- many.

To offer Ukrainian refugees a longer-term perspective, 70% of Germans would support granting them permanent residence and work permits. Around 56% would be in favor of more political support for Ukraine's accession to the EU, although only 19% indicate they would strongly support Ukrainian EU membership.

A vast majority of 93% stated the German government should provide financial support for low- and middle-income households to cope with rising energy and fuel prices. Many high-income earners would also be willing to contribute some of their income to support lower-income households (see briq policy monitor #1).

There are substantial differences along party lines (see figure 2). Stopping energy imports from Russia is supported by a majority across the political spectrum, except for AfD voters. Around two-thirds of right-wing (AfD) and left-wing (Die Linke) supporters oppose further arms deliveries to Ukraine. Strikingly, support not only for an embargo but also for arms deliveries to Ukraine is strongest among Green Party voters.

Fig. 2: Public support for energy embargo and arms supplies, by party preference



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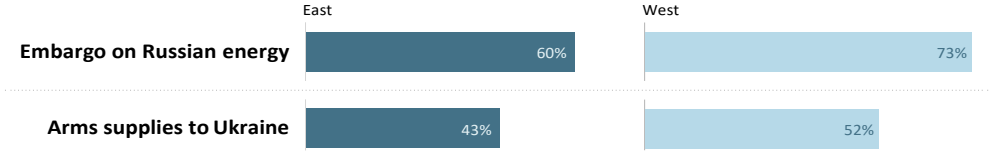
Generally, support for sanctions and relief measures is highest among altruistic individuals. However, there are also regional differences. Both policy measures garner less support in eastern German states (see figure 3). Men support arms deliveries more often (55%) than women (44%).

Fig. 3: Public support for energy embargo and arms supplies, by region



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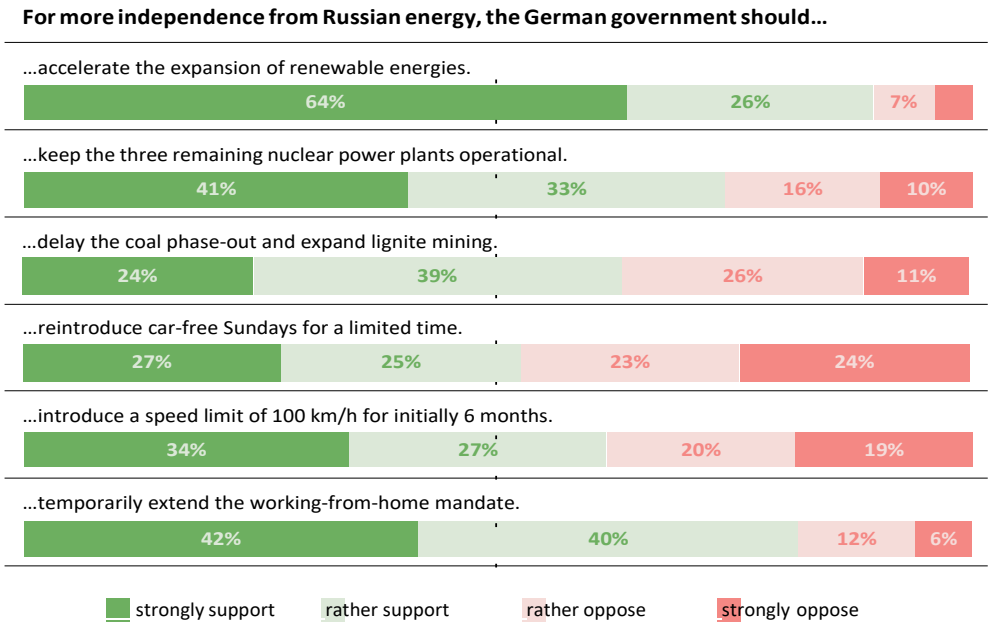
Support for strategies to reduce German energy dependence on Russia

For more independence from Russian gas and oil, Germany could accelerate the shift to renewables or resort to other alternative energy sources. Savings in energy and fuel consumption would also help. How popular are such measures among the German population?

A vast majority of 90% believe that the German government should accelerate the expansion of renewable energies. Three-quarters (74%) of respondents support a lifetime extension of the remaining three nuclear power plants if this were to reduce dependence on oil and gas imports from Russia. 63% would consider a temporary increase in lignite mining in Germany. Approval for an extension of nuclear power and coal mining is slightly lower among respondents with a higher level of education.

Most Germans would also support measures to reduce fuel consumption: 61% would accept a temporary speed limit of 100 km/h on German freeways; 52% would be in favor of reintroducing "car-free" Sundays as in previous oil crises. Four out of five Germans could also imagine extending the working-from-home mandate (see figure 4).

Fig. 4: Public support for policies to reduce energy dependence



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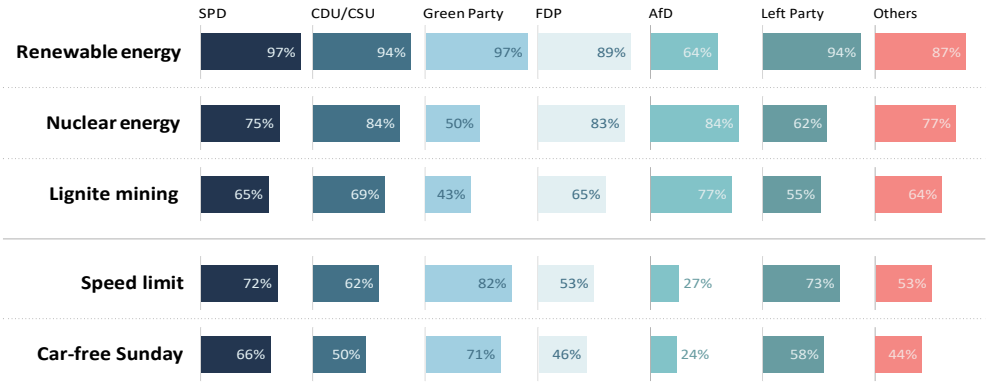
Support for alternative energy sources and measures to reduce fuel consumption depends strongly on party preferences (see figure 5). Willingness to rely more on nuclear power and coal is lowest among supporters of the Green Party, half of whom are open to expanding nuclear power because of the Ukraine war. Supporters of the right-wing party AfD are the only ones showing more support for nuclear power (84%) and coal (77%) than for an expansion of renewables (64%).

A temporary speed limit would only be approved by 27% of AfD voters, while even a majority of 53% of Free Democrats (FDP) voters would support it. Overall, agreement with the speed limit increases with age and decreases with household income. The idea of a car-free Sunday has the strongest support among Green Party (71%) and SPD (66%) voters. Support is lower in the eastern German states (45%) than in the west (56%).

Fig. 5: Public support for policies to reduce energy dependence, by party preference



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Political and personal engagement in response to the Ukraine war

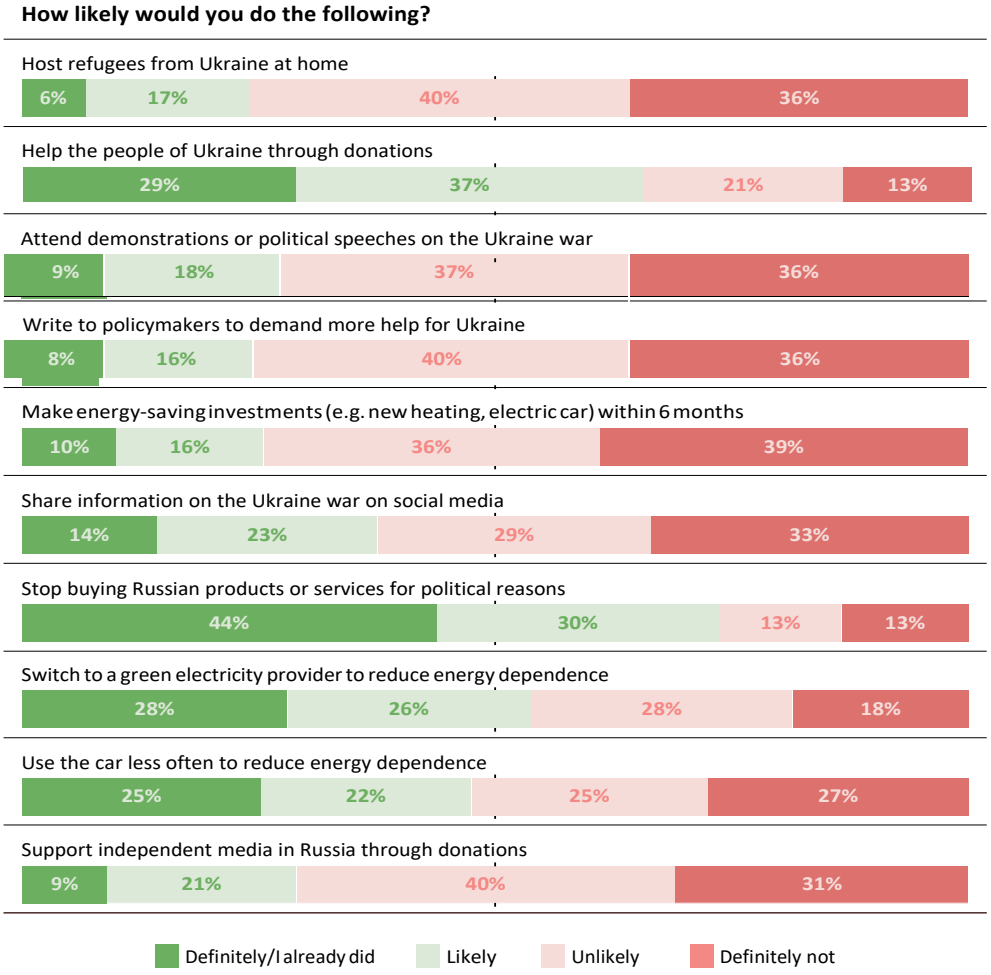
Hundreds of thousands of people in Germany have already attended protest rallies and peace demonstrations. Countless volunteers are collecting donations or helping refugees. What other forms of political and personal engagement are Germans willing to do?

Figure 6 illustrates the commitment of the German population on the basis of ten possible activities. For example, 29% of respondents said that they had already donated to the people in Ukraine or would definitely do so. A further 37% would likely donate some money. 23% of Germans could imagine hosting refugees from Ukraine in their own homes. Around one in four respondents might participate in peace demonstrations (27%) or sign petitions for more aid to Ukraine (24%).

A large majority of 74% have already boycotted goods and services from Russian companies or would likely do so. To reduce their personal dependence on energy imports from Russia, 54% of Germans would switch to green electricity suppliers or have already done so. Nearly half of respondents (47%) would be willing to use their car less often; one in four said they had already done so or would definitely do so.

To reduce their personal demand for fossil fuels, 26% of Germans consider investing in new heating technology, photovoltaics, or e-mobility. A large majority of the German population would also be willing to pay higher prices for fuel and heating and would lower their room temperature if this were to increase pressure on the Russian government (see briq policy monitor #1).

Fig. 6: Political and personal engagement in response to the Ukraine war



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Methods

We collected survey data from a representative sample of 2,000 study participants in Germany. To be eligible to participate in the study, respondents had to reside in Germany and be at least 18 years old. We collected the data in collaboration with the survey company Pureprofile. The experiment was computerized using the Qualtrics online survey tool. The data was collected between March 11 and 15, 2022. To ensure the highest possible quality of answers, all participants have to pass an attention check.

We used a stratified sampling approach to ensure that the samples represent the adult German population in terms of age, gender, and education. 51.10% are female, the average age of the respondents is 51 years, the average gross household income is between 30,000 and 40,000 euros. 27.67% of respondents live in eastern Germany (including Berlin).

Survey item: Policy measures

The question *"How much do you support or oppose the following policies?"* was used to measure attitudes based on a four-point Likert scale (*Strongly Support*, *Rather Support*, *Rather Oppose*, *Strongly Oppose*). Wording of the questions, translated to English:

The German government should…
…put an embargo on energy imports from Russia (oil, gas, coal).
…accelerate the expansion of renewable energies to become less dependent on Russian energy.
…supply more weapons to Ukraine.
…extend the lifetime of the three remaining nuclear power plants to become less dependent on Russian energy.
…introduce a speed limit of 100 km/h for an initial period of 6 months to become less dependent on Russian energy.
…seize assets from people close to Putin to mitigate the economic impact of the sanctions on Germany.
…grant refugees from Ukraine permanent residence and work permits.
…temporarily introduce car-free Sundays to become less dependent on Russian energy.
…support Ukraine's accession to the EU.
…temporarily increase lignite mining to become less dependent on Russian energy.
…provide financial support to low- and middle-income households facing high energy and fuel prices.
…extend the working-from-home to become less dependent on Russian energy.

Survey item: Political and personal engagement

The question *"How likely would you do the following?"* was used to measure respondents' willingness on a four-point Likert scale (*Definitely*, *Likely*, *Unlikely*, *Definitely Not* – plus the option *I already did*). Wording of the question items, translated to English:

Host refugees from Ukraine at my home
Help the people of Ukraine through donations
Attend demonstrations or political speeches on the Ukraine war
Write to policymakers to demand more help for Ukraine
Make energy-saving investments (e.g. new heating, photovoltaics, electric car) within the next 6 months
Share information on the Ukraine war on social media
Stop buying Russian products or services for political reasons
Switch to a green electricity provider to reduce energy dependence
Use the car less often to reduce energy dependence
Support independent media in Russia through donations

Additional measures

We collect detailed information on individual background characteristics. These include age, gender, education, employment status, household income, the number of children, party preferences, and state of residence. We further elicit if participants own and how often they use a car. In addition, we obtain an individual-level measure of altruism following the methodology in the Global Preferences Survey.[1]

1 Falk, A., Becker, A., Dohmen, T., Enke, B., Huffman, D., & Sunde, U. (2018). Global evidence on economic preferences. Quarterly Journal of Economics, 133 (4), 1645–1692.