

UKRAINIAN IDENTITY IN RUSSIA ON THE EVE OF 2022

“I don’t understand why all this hatred” vs. “Ukrainians are treated well”

The article, based on the data from field sociological studies carried out in several regions of the Russian Federation among people with Ukrainian identity in 2020–2021, examines the level of social comfort when expressing their ethnicity in public and the frequency of ethnically motivated negative attitude to Ukrainians. Ethnic statistics and demographic trends show that socio-political factors have played a key role in the numerical dynamics of the Ukrainian population in Russia throughout the last century. The author wonders to what extent the decline in the number of Ukrainians over the past three decades correlates with ethnically motivated xenophobia against them, although the increase in migration should have stopped the depopulation. The empirical data of the author’s sociological research show that in such an “burning” and intimate issue as interethnic relations, quantitative sociological methods do not quite correctly reflect the existing realities, because many respondents try to “embellish” the situation. The data collected using qualitative methodology shows that about half of the respondents experienced some degree of discomfort with their Ukrainian identity, sometime faced xenophobic manifestations or choose a strategy of concealing their Ukrainian identity (oscillating identity). Moreover, respondents of all ages and regions of residence declare such a situation, and ethnic deprivation or cases of interethnic conflicts refer to both the Soviet and modern periods.

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For citation: Bublikov, V. V. 2023. Ukrainian Identity in Russia on the Eve of 2022. *Herald of Anthropology (Vestnik Antropologii)* 1: 142–161.

Funding: The study was carried out with the financial support of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research, scientific project No. 20–011–00676 “Multiple Russian-Ukrainian ethnic identity in Russia and its regional characteristics”.

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