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Russians' ideas of heroes and heroism: Stable and changing components (based on the public opinion polls)*

I.V. Trotsuk^{1,2,3}, M.V. Subbotina¹

¹RUDN University,
Miklukho-Maklaya St., 6, Moscow, 117198, Russia

²Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration,
Vernadskogo Prosp., 84, Moscow, 119571, Russia

³National Research University Higher School of Economics,
Myasnitskaya St., 20, Moscow, 101000, Russia

(e-mail: irina.trotsuk@yandex.ru; mariya.subbotina.1995@mail.ru)

Abstract. Despite an extensive list of the well-described aspects of heroism, this phenomenon is still understudied in sociology. Most of the projects and publications focus on identifying ‘heroes’ in public opinion or media discourse rather than on explaining why communities/societies ‘appoint’ some people heroes, and what is the conventional meaning of the word ‘hero’. Society has always paid close attention to the so-called ‘outstanding personalities’: there are official and folk heroes in all cultures, and they have always served as a kind of reference group for decision-making and self-identification. Moreover, specific types of heroes serve as one of the cultural system’s means for (self-) representation: the most typical hero is often directly related to the society’s ethical complex. The authors systematize the sociologically relevant interpretations of ‘hero’ and ‘heroism’ together with the typologies of heroic behavior and identify contemporary trends in the empirical study of heroism (sociological surveys). The second part of the article presents the results of the all-Russian online survey of four age groups: 14–19-year-olds, 20–29, 30–49 and 50–69 (N=800, 200 respondents from each age group). The survey aimed at identifying and comparing the ideas of different Russian generations about heroes and heroism. Two surveys were conducted — in 2020 and 2022, and the authors focus on the changes in the social representations of the heroic. In general, the older generation names the hero-rescuer and the hero-warrior as the main heroic types, while the younger generation prefers the hero-rescuer and the hero-good-doer. In 2022, respondents were less open to questions about heroes and heroism, especially about manifestations of military heroism, but the key social representations of the heroic did not change.

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Heroism has always been an object of scientific interest, but there are still many questions about the essence, functions, forms and transformations of the heroic in the historical, comparative, daily and scientific perspectives. Moreover, in recent decades, several new directions of heroism studies have developed: heroic leadership [19], everyday heroism [33], collective heroism [35], heroic bodies [24] and even ‘genetic’ heroism [28]. Researchers fascinated by heroic issues insist on the need for a separate science of heroism [23], since interdisciplinary unity is the central task in its study, and the ‘science of heroism’ is to integrate all its forms and elements [31] in order to answer the following questions: how society can ‘push’ people to heroic actions; in what life conditions people become heroes [36]; how the images of heroes affect socialization of younger generations and the ability of adolescents to overcome difficulties [34]; why the same actions can lead to condemnation or, on the contrary, to the heroic ‘title’ [21], etc.

The existing definitions of heroism can be summarized as follows: selflessness, courage, ability to accomplish a feat [9; 10]; courage, determination and self-sacrifice in a critical situation [4]; socially outstanding actions that meet the interests of the people, progressive classes/communities and require personal courage, persistence, readiness for self-sacrifice [14]; extraordinary courage contrary to personal interests [7]. Thus, the main features of heroism include the denial/ignorance of personal interests for the benefit of others; actions beyond the boundaries of the ordinary; courage and readiness for self-sacrifice in a difficult situation [4; 5; 11]. It would seem that the hero is a person who performs a heroic act, but the word ‘hero’ can mean far more than just manifestations of heroism: one who accomplished a feat of courage, valor, selflessness; an outstanding person who attracted attention (‘hero of the day’ in the news); an ideal, an object of admiration, a role model; an image that embodies the features of an era or society (‘hero of our time’); the main character in a movie, book, play [10]. Probably, all non-heroic incarnations of the ‘hero’ are associated with standing out from the mass: an extraordinary act (positive or negative in the value categories), pronounced positive qualities, ability to motivate and set an example, main characters with developed personality traits (as opposed to minor characters), which serve as plot ‘engines’ [15].

Although interpretations of heroism are not extremely contradictory, their as if simplicity hides interrelated paradoxes determined by the very nature of heroism: it is a social attribution, although a heroic deed is usually a personal existential choice [1; 13; 16; 22]. The complexity of heroism is determined historically, politically, culturally and situationally: thus, actions perceived as heroic in one group (for example, terroristic suicide) can be considered horrifying and unacceptable by many others; heroes of one era may turn into villains in the other, when new facts are revealed or interpretation of the old ones changes (for example, ‘cancel culture’ makes some past actions/statements unacceptable according to the ‘new ethics’). Nevertheless, for the purposes of the empirical sociological analysis, we define the hero as a selfless person capable of valuing other people’s interests above one’s own and of accomplishing a feat, and we use our typology of heroes: warrior (military heroism), rescuer (In emergency situations), philanthropist/good-doer (helping people), inspirer (overcoming oneself), adventurer and demonstrator (ostentatious heroism) [13].

There are many classifications reflecting the diversity of heroes and heroic deeds [6; 8; 25], and the most interesting in the sociological perspective is the typology by Z. Franco, K. Blau and P. Zimbardo, who believe that most people are capable of heroic deeds with the right mindset and in certain conditions [38]. The authors admit the differences between courage and heroic deeds and identify the following general characteristics of heroism: its manifestations are associated with danger that exceeds the expected; all types of heroism imply readiness to get into a dangerous situation; the actor overcomes serious fear and acts decisively [27]. The authors distinguish three forms of heroism — military, civil and social [26]: ‘military heroes’ risk their lives and health on duty (policemen, firefighters, rescuers), civilian heroes — from personal convictions, and social heroes make other sacrifices (financial consequences, loss of social status, long-term health problems, public censure) [29]. The authors proposed 12 heroic subtypes and situations that require heroic deeds [26]: military and civil heroism (associated with physical risk) and 10 subtypes of social heroism — religious and political-religious figures, martyrs, political and military leaders, adventurers and scientists-inventors, good Samaritans, unexpected winners in difficult situations, bureaucratic heroes and informers [12]. Certainly, this list is somewhat arbitrary and reflects the researchers’ views, but it ‘works’

well in empirical studies, especially since ‘social heroism’ became extremely relevant today in the form of ‘everyday heroism’.

Thus, Zimbardo participated in the study in Hungary, which aimed at identifying how people understand (and differentiate) heroism and everyday heroism [33]: more than a thousand respondents aged 15 to 75 named five words/phrases that describe the hero (a half of the sample) or everyday hero (another half), i.e., the association method was used, and the characteristics identified were compared (Table 1).

Table 1

Comparison of the concepts ‘hero’ and ‘everyday hero’

Feature	Hero	Everyday hero
Scale	Affects many people (one deed is transformative and inspiring)	Has a local/limited impact on society
Publicity	Becomes famous and interacts with celebrities, role models, sports stars and leaders	Stays unnoticed
Complexity	Takes serious risks and makes significant sacrifices	Faces social challenges
Prevalence	Heroic deeds happen occasionally/ in special circumstances	Heroic deeds are possible in everyday situations
Special abilities	Is associated with special abilities or extraordinary character	Has no special traits or outstanding abilities

Associations with the hero were mostly abstract: brave, selfless, strong, useful, persistent, honest, courageous and sacrificial; among specific associations, ‘warrior’, ‘role model’ and ‘savior’ prevail. Associations with the everyday hero were also diverse: abstract — useful, brave, selfless, modest, honest, attentive, loving, kind and decisive (values); specific — fireman, paramedic, mother and doctor (roles and professions). Such characteristics as ‘useful’, ‘brave’, ‘selfless’ and ‘honest’ were applied to both the hero and the everyday hero, but for the hero, respondents more often chose definitions/ epithets, while for the everyday hero — professions, social roles or specific characters. In other words, social representations of heroism consist of abstract

values and characteristics, and there are no clear boundaries between heroes and such related terms as ‘celebrities’, ‘stars’, ‘role models’ and ‘martyrs’, which contradicts the division of heroic deeds into ‘heroism with a capital letter’ and ‘heroism with a small letter’ [25].

Table 2

Feats of the awarded heroes

Description	Type
Overcoming injury/illness	Overcoming injury
Frees/saves someone	Saving a life
Risks life, puts oneself in danger	Accepts danger
Takes command/charge	Takes command
Remains the winner when everyone is against him	Wins with little chances
Seizes opportunities	Seizes opportunities
Devoted to duty	Devoted to duty
Sets an example	Personal example

R. Johnson [32] conducted a similar study of the off-duty civil awards, based on such information as whether the rescue operation led to the death of the hero or of those he tried to save; age and gender of the rescuer and the rescued; occupation and place of residence of the rescuer; relationship between the rescuer and the rescued, or whether they knew each other. From 1989 to 1995, the Carnegie Hero Fund called 676 people heroes, 92 % were men; women more often saved relatives or someone they knew, while men — strangers; almost every fifth rescue attempt resulted in the death of the rescuer. Rescuers are mainly residents of small towns and villages, which is explained by the theory of reciprocal altruism [37]: people act altruistically, hoping that others will do the same when they need it.

In 2014, a survey was conducted to identify whom Americans consider heroes (1), and an open question was used. Every third respondent (32 %) named a family member (26 % — parents), 21 % — the military, 19 % — religious figures and/or deities, 18 % — doctors and emergency workers, 17 % — U.S. presidents, 12 % —

social activists, 11 % — celebrities. Respondents were also asked to choose from the list one or more reasons why a person can be considered a hero: does the right thing despite personal risk (76 %); does not give up until reaches the goal (65 %); remains calm in a crisis situation and does more than is expected of him (64 % each); changes society for the better (63 %); overcomes adversity (61 %); does not expect recognition and gratitude (57 %), i.e., this is the hero-inspirer. Although Americans consider the military as heroes, in the conditional heroes ‘ranking’ religious figures/deities, politicians and activists are on the top, and not all people in the list have the ‘heroic qualities’, i.e., there is a discrepancy between ideas about the hero and who can be called a hero. The comparison of the list of personalities that Americans consider heroes with the official list of heroes on the website of the US Department of the Interior (2) showed few similarities: Presidents R. Reagan, A. Lincoln and G. Washington, General G. Patton, activists B. Graham and M.L. King. The fact is that the website presents a list of historical figures, while people consider their contemporaries or cult characters to be heroes; classifications of heroes are arbitrary; ideas about heroism are ambiguous.

In 2018, S.T. Allison conducted an online survey of 202 representatives of the generation Y (millennials) — born between 1980 and 2000 — in the United States. Respondents were asked to choose qualities that the hero should have: smart (56 %), inspiring (52 %), strong (50 %), charismatic (42 %), selfless (33 %), cheerful (39 %), caring (23 %), reliable (16 %), i.e., millennials valued strength and intelligence as inspiring [17]. According to the 2019 study, people who committed heroic deeds are considered to have four common features: previously thought about how they would act if their help was needed; do not divide people into ‘us’ and ‘them’; regularly help others (everyday heroism); have experience that gives them confidence in that they would resolve a risky situation [36].

In Russia, there are relatively few studies of heroism (even including the related issues): VCIOM’s (Russian Public Opinion Research Center) survey “Hero of Our Time” in 2007 (3); joint project of the FOM (Public Opinion Foundation) and TV channel ‘Russia’ “Russia’s Historical Figures with the Greatest Impact on the Fate of the Country” in 2008 (4); FOM’s “Heroes Ranking” in 2009 (5); VCIOM’s survey on the hero’s qualities in 2019 (6); VCIOM’s project “Russians named people of the year” in 2020 (7) and several similar polls (8–10) [13]. For instance, in 2019, Russians named the main qualities of the “hero of our time”: honesty, decency, fairness and responsibility (36 %), benevolence and humanity (19 %), activity and sociability

(18 %), courage (13 %), care and altruism (10 %) (6). “The person of 2020” was honest, decent and fair (13 %), most likely a doctor or teacher (9 %), active, sociable, proactive and purposeful (8 %), brave, fearless, with strong character (8 %). In 2020, the qualities of the hero differed slightly from previous years — people emphasized the professions of doctors and teachers: under the pandemic, Russians considered mainly doctors (55 %), employees of the Ministry of Emergency Situations (31 %), virologists and vaccine developers (22 %) as heroes. At the same time, Russians named as anti-heroes those speculators who inflated prices and created a shortage of food and medicines (44 %), alarmists (30 %), politicians who criticized restrictions for the sake of popularity (21 %), covid dissidents (19 %) and regional leaders who failed to cope with the pandemic (11 %) (11).

Every year, the VCIOM publishes the results of surveys on the most significant figures of the year. Certainly, these are not heroes in the classical sense; however, such polls focus on the key feature of the heroic — standing out from the crowd (Table 3). From 2008 to 2021, Russians’ ideas about the main political figure of the country did not change — V.V. Putin, while the ideas about the most popular athletes changed most often depending on the results of annual competitions: the only exception is when an athlete gets into a media scandal or participates in the popular TV show. The same applies to media characters who are most likely to be on everyone’s lips for many reasons (for example, D. Hvorostovsky was named the musician of 2017 due to his tragic death short before the survey). Thus, direct questions about whom respondents consider an iconic person (or hero) do not work in sociological surveys, since average answers reflect not so much personal beliefs as the media agenda.

In 2022, many categories were excluded from the questionnaire (‘politician of the year’ and rankings of athletes, writers and actors), only the ‘musicians of the year’ remained. Respondents answered questions about whom they considered heroes — military personnel in hot spots (54 %), doctors (38 %) and employees of the Ministry of Emergency Situations (32 %); and what qualities ‘made’ a hero — courage and heroism (9 %); patriotism and loyalty to the motherland (7 %). Compared to 2020, respondents more often named volunteers and social workers (20 % vs 15 %), which can be explained by the special military operation (10). In general, over the past decade, the most significant heroes of the past and present have not changed (the list, not the level of popularity). Since 1989, Russians have considered I. Stalin (39 %), V. Lenin (30 %), A. Pushkin (23 %), Peter the Great (19 %) and V. Putin (15 %) the most outstanding personalities of all times and peoples (9) [2]. Although ideas about

heroes differ by generation, some historical figures are important for all age groups (I.V. Stalin, V.V. Putin, A.S. Pushkin, V.I. Lenin, Peter the Great, etc.), i.e., there is a stable image of the ‘hero of the time’ in the mass consciousness (Table 4).

Table 3

Results of the year in faces (2008–2021)

Year	Politician	Athlete	Musician	Writer	Actor
2008	Putin (60%)	Arshavin (18%)	Bilan (17%)	Solzhenitsyn (7%)	Khabensky (14%)
2009	Putin (50%)	Arshavin (18%)	Baskov (8%)		Khabensky (7%)
2010	Putin (55%)	Arshavin (11%)	Kirkorov (8%)	Dontsova (8%)	Bezrukov (4%)
2011	Putin (38%)	Arshavin (5%)	Kirkorov (11%)	Dontsova, Akunin (3%)	Bezrukov (9%)
2012	Putin (54%)	Plushenko (9%)	Mikhailov (9%)	Dontsova (8%)	Bezrukov (7%)
2013	Putin (44%)	Plushenko (10%)	Kirkorov (6%)	Dontsova (6%)	Bezrukov (7%)
2014	Putin (71%)	Plushenko (6%)	Krutoy (5%)	Dontsova (4%)	Nagiev (5%)
2015	Putin (74%)		Kirkorov (6%)		Bezrukov, Khabensky (5%)
2016	Putin (64%)	Isinbayeva (8%)	Kirkorov (7%)	Dontsova (3%)	Kozlovsky, Bezrukov (5%)
2017	Putin (58%)	Shipulin, Ovechkin, Medvedeva (4%)	Hvorostovsky (14%)	Dontsova, Akunin (2%)	Bezrukov, Khabensky (5%)
2018	Putin (46%)	Zagitova, Medvedeva (11%)	Kirkorov (10%)	Dontsova, Pushkin (2%)	Bezrukov (8%)
2019	Putin (46%)	Nurmagomedov, Zagitova (7%), Dzyuba (6%)	Kirkorov, Matsuev (5%)	Dontsova, Pushkin (2%)	Petrov, Khabensky (4%)
2020	Putin (38%)	Nurmagomedov (10%), Dzyuba (8%)	Kirkorov (6%)	Prilepin (3%), Akunin (2%)	Khabensky (5%), Petrov (4%)
2021	Putin (38%)	Averins, Medvedev (4%), Bolshunov (3%)	Gradsky (9%), Kirkorov (4%)	Pushkin, Prilepin, Pelevin (2%)	Khabensky (4%), Petrov, Bezrukov (3%)

Table 4

**The most outstanding people of all times and peoples
(%, open question, ranking according to the data from May 2021)**

Person	1994	1999	2003	2008	2012	2017	2021
I. Stalin	20	35	40	36	42	38	39
V. Lenin	34	42	43	34	37	32	30
A. Pushkin	23	42	39	47	29	34	23
Peter the Great	41	45	43	37	37	29	19
V. Putin			21	32	22	34	15
Yu. Gagarin	8	26	33	25	20	20	13
G. Zhukov	14	20	22	23	15	12	12
L. Brezhnev	6	8	12	9	12	8	10
A. Einstein	5	6	7	7	7	7	9
D. Mendeleev	6	12	13	13	12	10	8
M. Lomonosov	13	18	17	17	15	10	8
A. Sakharov	17	8	9	6	6	2	7
L. Tolstoy	8	12	12	14	24	12	7
A. Suvorov	18	18	16	16	12	10	7
Catherine the Great	10	10	11	8	11	11	6
M. Lermontov	5	9	10	9	8	11	6
M. Kutuzov	11	11	10	11	12	7	5
Napoleon Bonaparte	19	19	13	9	13	9	5
S. Korolev	6	9	11	10	4	5	5
A. Hitler	9	7		6	10	5	5

According to the survey conducted in February 2021, schoolchildren (grades 6–11) consider primarily their parents and grandparents (26 %) as heroes; then come movie and cartoon characters — Iron Man, Spider Man and Naruto (10 %); heroes of the Great Patriotic War and the today’s military (5.4 %), Yu. Gagarin (3 %), V. Putin (2.6 %), doctors (2.4 %), employees of the Ministry of Emergency Situations

and the police (2.1 %), athletes and foreign actors (2 %); marshals G. Zhukov and M. Kutuzov, V. Lenin and Z. Kosmodemyanskaya (1 %); 23.4 % of schoolchildren could not name their heroes (12). Despite the fears of the older generation about the moral character of the today's youth, Russian students support the ideas of heroic deeds, sacrifice and examples [3]: 73 % agree that “one should be ready for the feat every minute”, i.e., support the fundamental Soviet idea of “being ready”. However, in the study of heroism, direct questions are hardly sufficient since respondents' answers seem to reproduce social stereotypes about heroism rather than to express personal opinions. Moreover, most studies of heroism focus on the ‘identification’ of heroes rather than on understanding why people name someone a hero and what meaning put into the word ‘hero’.

In 2020, we conducted the all-Russian online survey of four age groups — 14–19-year-olds, 20–29, 30–49 and 50–69 (N=800) — to identify, systematize and compare different generations' ideas about heroism. In 2022, we conducted the second survey based on the same sample and questionnaire to compare the data. In 2020, respondents interpreted heroism mainly as “self-sacrifice and ability to accomplish a feat” (59 %), “selflessness and courage” (57 %), “desire to fight for justice in any situation and to protect the weak” (41 %). Heroism was least often defined as “the pinnacle of virtue, the ideal type of behavior every person should strive for” (18 %), especially in the older group (19 % of the aged 14–19 vs 9 % of the aged 50–69). The definition of heroism as “general positive quality, concentration of physical, mental, spiritual and moral forces” was chosen by every fourth (24 %), and the largest differences were between the 20–29-year-olds (29 %) and 50–69-year-olds (17 %). In 2022, the general structure of interpretations did not change much, but the shares of the most popular definitions decreased: “selflessness and courage” (48 %), “self-sacrifice and ability to accomplish a feat” (46 %), “desire to fight for justice in any situation and to protect the weak” (41 %), “the pinnacle of virtue, the ideal type of behavior every person should strive for” (19 %). Moreover, there were more clear differences between the youngest and the oldest: the last interpretation was chosen by 29 % of the youngest respondents and by every tenth in the oldest group; “desire to fight for justice in any situation and to protect the weak” was chosen by 28 % in the oldest group in 2020 and by 34 % in 2022; its share in the group of 30–49-year-olds, on the contrary, decreased — from 46 % to 33 %.

The questionnaire included a list of statements with which respondents were to agree/disagree (Table 5).

Table 5

Agreement with statements (In %)

Statement	2020	2022	Rank
Heroic deeds for the benefit of others can make one happy	88,9	83,5	1
Hero is never guided by one's own benefit	85,2	80,9	1
Heroic deeds as overcoming oneself can make one happy	84,3	80,3	1
Heroism is a manifestation of love: one is capable of heroic deeds for the sake of loved ones (parents, children)	84,2	83,4	1
Helping people is not necessarily associated with risk (for instance, charity)	78,3	83	2-1
Proper upbringing can make anyone a hero	77,9	77	2
Most people are capable of heroic deeds — with the right attitude and in the right circumstances	75,8	73,9	2
Heroism is a multifaceted concept: a hero for some may be a villain for others	75,3	80	2-1
Heroism is a manifestation of love to one's homeland, people	73,4	70,4	2
Hero is not the one who performs official duty, he is the one who for whom a heroic deed is exceptional	72,4	73	2
Hero cannot act unfairly to others	69,1	64,2	3
Hero never flaunts one's deeds/performs them for show	66,3	63,5	3
The one who honestly and diligently does one's job can be called a hero	61,7	66,1	3
Hero is a collective image of the generation reflecting its main features	59,1	59,8	3
One must risk oneself to be considered a hero	45,2	39,6	4
Today real heroes can be found only in movies	20,6	19,4	5

We conditionally ranked these statements by the share of respondents who agreed with them, and the prevailing interpretations of the hero are as follows:

1. Over 80 % believe that “heroic deeds for the benefit of others can make one happy” (89 % in 2020 and 84 % in 2022) just as “heroic deeds as overcoming oneself” (84 % and 80 %; more often women); “hero is never guided by one’s own benefit” (85 % and 81 %); “heroism is a manifestation of love” (84 % and 83 %). In 2022, this group included interpretations of heroism as “helping people not necessarily associated with risk” (83 % vs 78 % in 2020; in 2022, there is a gap between the oldest and the youngest — 72 % vs 90 %); and as “a multifaceted concept” (80 % and 75 %; in the oldest group, this share increased from 67 % to 75 %), although the changes are insignificant.
2. From 70 % to 80 % believe that “proper upbringing can make anyone a hero” (78 % in 2020 and 77 % in 2022; 20–29-year-olds think so more often — 83 %), “most people are capable of heroic deeds” (76 % and 74 %; the oldest generation thinks so less often — 65 % and 63 %), “heroism is a manifestation of love to one’s homeland, people” (74 % and 70 %; more often the oldest group — 82 % and 77 %) rather than fulfillment of duty (72 % and 73 %).
3. From 59 % to 69 % believe that “hero cannot act unfairly” (69 % and 64 %; among the 50–69-year-olds, this share decreased from 81 % to 67 %) or “flaunt one’s deeds” (66 % and 64 %; more often men — 78 % vs 59 % — and older generations — almost 80 %); the hero “honestly and diligently does one’s job” (61 % and 66 %; more often teenagers than the oldest group — 74 % vs 51 %); at the same time, “hero is a collective image of the generation” (59 % and 60 %; this share increased in the oldest group from 41 % to 52 %).
4. Less often risk is defined as an obligatory element of heroism (45 % and 40 %; more often men — 52 % vs 39 % and 45 % vs 34 %).
5. Every fifth (21 % and 19 %) pessimistically believes that today “real heroes can be found only in movies” (this share among adolescents increased from 11 % to 19 %).

In other words, Russians consider as the main heroic qualities the selfless ability to overcome oneself for the good of others, which makes the hero happy, is not necessarily associated with risk and is not always perceived

unambiguously; therefore, most people are capable of heroic deeds — with proper upbringing, with right attitude and in right circumstances. Somewhat less significant heroic attributes are the rejection of injustice and ostentation, routine nature of (everyday) heroism and personification of the main features of the generation.

Respondents were asked to choose from the list those actions that they consider heroic (Fig. 1): saving someone in an emergency — from the fire (91 % in 2020 and 81 % in 2022) or drowning (88 % and 79 %) — is the main and unambiguous heroic deeds. It seems that changes in indicators are determined by the objective social realities (since February 2022, many ‘heroic deeds’ have turned from very abstract into the most possible ‘here and now’) that affected all definitions of the heroic, albeit in varying degrees. Thus, the second place was taken by self-sacrifice on the battlefield (71 % and 55 %) and keeping military secrets under torture (66 % and 53 %), preventing a car accident at the cost of one’s life (66 % and 50 %) or without death (58 % and 50 %), labor heroism (54 % and 44 %), victory without destroying the enemy (53 % and 48 %) and volunteering (51 % and 43 %); the third place — by charity (46 % and 38 %), overcoming one’s fears (44 %), adopting a child (40 % and 38 %) and guerilla struggle in 2020 (41 %), but not in 2022 (26 %); the fourth place — by killing an enemy at war (27 % and 19 %) and rejection of envy/negative attitudes towards others (25 % and 23 %). Russians do not consider all other ‘self-expressions’ to be heroic — hermitry or asceticism, dangerous stunts for adrenaline, money or other purposes.

Respondents were asked to assess examples of heroism in terms of their correspondence to personal ideas, and we summarized the results in the following conditional ‘ranking’ (it did not change much in 2022):

1. ordinary people who try to save others by deliberately endangering themselves at the call of the heart (82 %);
2. people on duty in military or rescue operations, who are ready for serious injury or death (military, police, firefighters, etc.) (72 %); and people who lead a group in difficult periods (war, disaster, etc.) to save it (68 %);
3. altruists who are the first to come to rescue (59 %; less often the oldest group — 45 %); people who achieved success and/or recognition despite physical or other limitations and became an example for others (58 %); researchers and inventors (53 %);

4. employees of big companies who oppose the system for a higher purpose and despite pressure (46 %); who publicly expose illegal/unethical activities to change the situation and not for recognition/reward (42 %; less often the oldest group — 33 %);
5. religious leaders who started large-scale political changes or politicians whose beliefs change society (18 %; less often the oldest group — 8 %); who dedicated themselves to religion, ascetics who renounced worldly goods (17 % and 8 %).

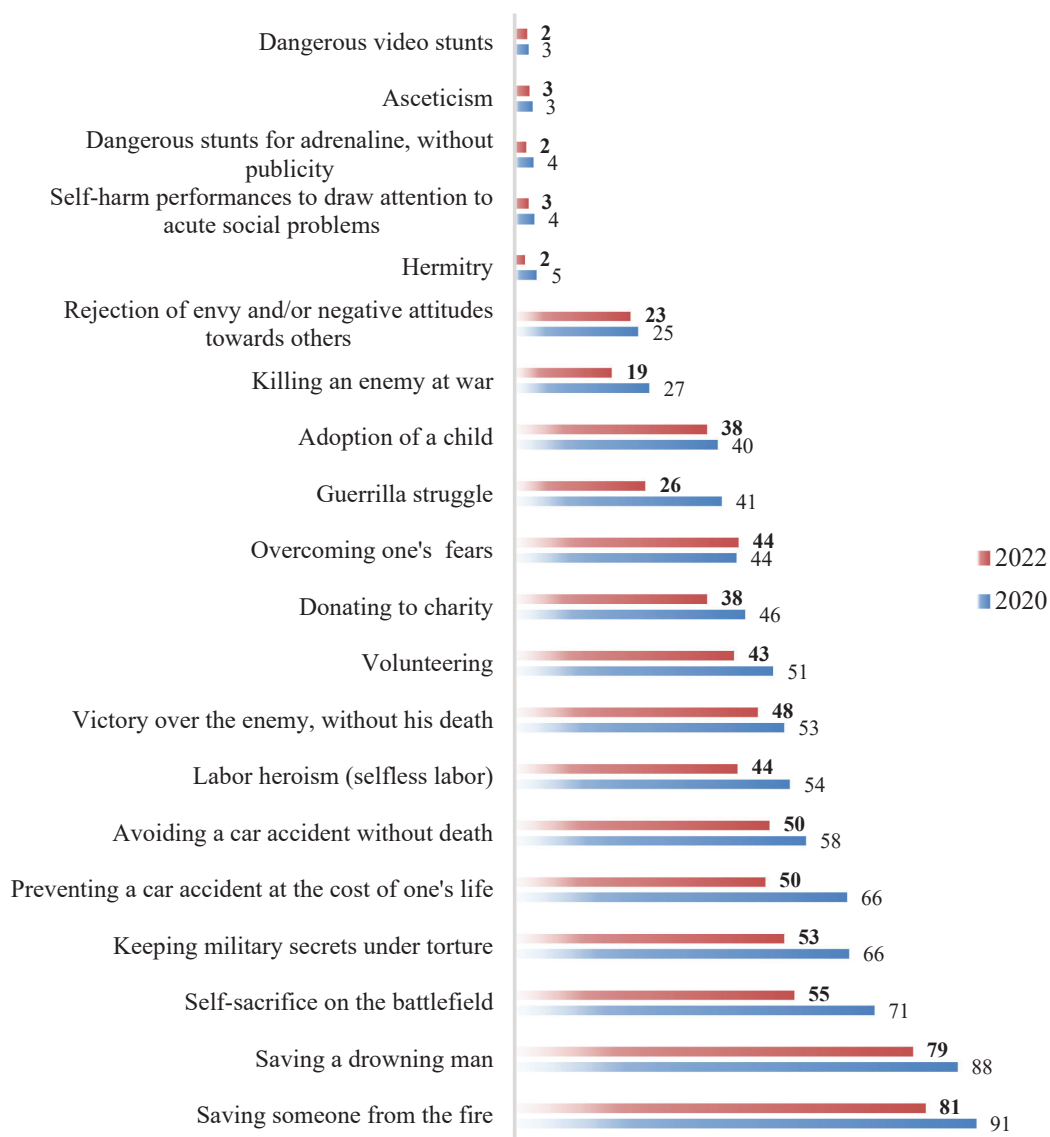


Fig. 1. Heroic deeds (In %)

Accordingly, the most important qualities of the hero as follows (Fig. 2): first of all, strength of mind (77 % in 2020, 68 % in 2022); then justice (62 % and 59 %), dedication (61 % and 54 %), responsibility (56 % and 54 %) and honesty (56 % and 55 %); intelligence (40 % and 41 %) and reliability (49 % and 45 %); modesty (28 % and 25 %), physical strength (19 % and 23 %) and the ability to inspire (16 % and 18 %), in 2022 also cheerfulness (15 % vs 11 % in 2020), charisma (8 % in 2020, 10 % in 2022), sense of humor (8 % and 11 %), cunning (7 % and 9 %) and adventurism (5 %). In other words, Russians consider strength of mind and selfless, responsible and honest fight for justice to be the ‘core’ of the hero’s personality. And social-demographic differences are insignificant: women and younger generations value honesty and justice somewhat more, while men and older generations — selflessness; 20–29-year-olds — intelligence and responsibility, teenagers — charisma and cunning; older generations — reliability, sense of humor and adventurism, but not the ability to inspire. There are some insignificant changes in the characteristics of the hero in 2022 but not in the ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ of the hero’s personality.

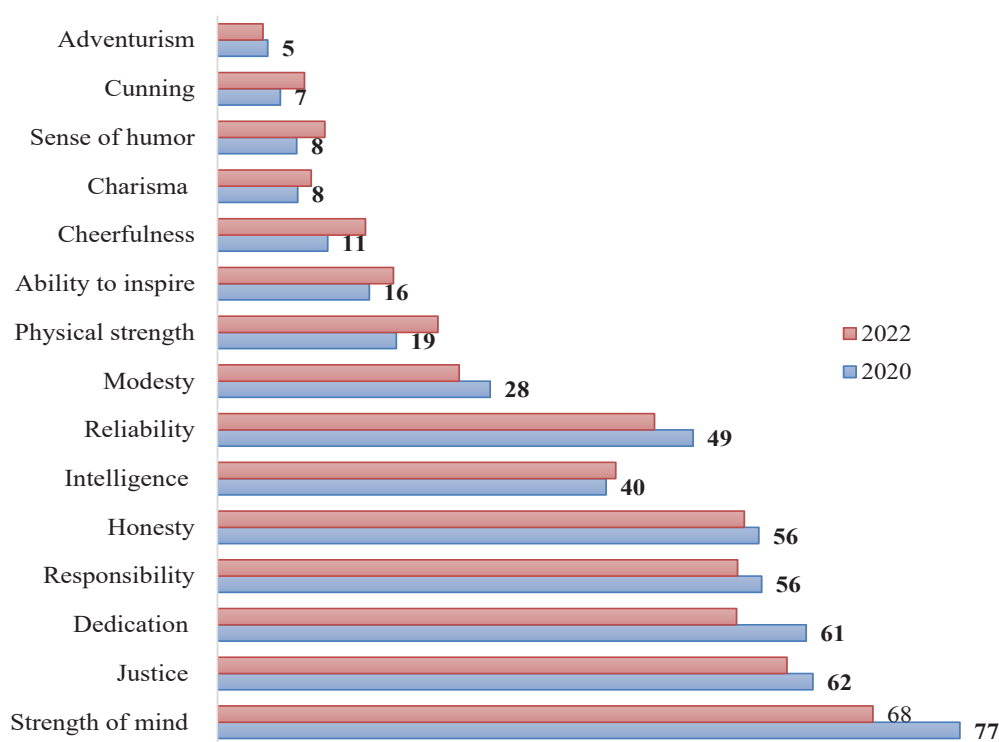


Fig. 2. Main qualities of the hero (In %)

The questionnaire included an open question about ‘everyday heroism’. The younger generations provided three its interpretations: daily good deeds (giving up one’s seat on public transport, helping an elderly person to cross the road, charity); work/professional activities associated with risk (military, doctors); overcoming oneself. In 2020, 20–29-year-olds more often called doctors ‘everyday heroes’, in 2022 — professional rescuers; 30–49-year-olds more often found it difficult to answer the question, but in general defined everyday heroism as daily good deeds and honest work; the majority in the oldest group consider honest and hard work as everyday heroism, and in 2022 also the ability to keep one’s positive qualities in a difficult situation.

Respondents were asked to complete the sentence “Hero will never...”: in 2020, the endings “lie”, “flaunt one’s actions”, “offend the weak”, “act for profit”, “be afraid” prevailed; 30–49-year-olds also added “be alone” and “be forgotten”. In 2022, there are no significant changes except for the ending “flaunt one’s actions”, which became more common for all age groups. The endings of this unfinished sentence are close to the definition of the false hero: “flaunts one’s actions”; “takes credit for someone else’s achievements”; “invents feats he did not accomplish to get attention”; “accomplishes heroic deeds for profit”. Most respondents found it difficult to characterize the anti-hero (In literature, the complete opposite of the hero, a person with negative qualities, a villain), perhaps, not seeing his fundamental differences from the false hero (In general, definitions of the anti-hero are more cinematic, while definitions of the false hero are closer to real life). When finishing the sentence “Anyone can become a hero if...”, most of the 14–19-year-olds added “one wants” or “has proper upbringing”; 20–29-year-olds more often mentioned specific qualities (courage, strength of mind, selflessness, honesty; in 2022 — also kindness, justice and unselfishness); 30–49-year-olds more often added courage and self-confidence, and the oldest generation — right circumstances but only with proper upbringing.

When answering the question of whom to suggest as an example for children, respondents named primarily participants of the Great Patriotic War (78 % in 2020 and 71 % in 2022) and employees of the Ministry of Emergency Situations (69 % and 64 %), i.e. ‘military’ and ‘rescue’ heroism on duty; then come “simple hard workers who honestly do their job” (59 % and 57 %), i.e. everyday ‘labor’ heroism; and, finally, representatives of the complex, responsible and socially most ‘visible’ professions — cosmonauts (48 % and 41 %), military

(38 % and 39 %), scientists (36 % and 35 %), policemen (28 % and 27 %) and athletes (28 % and 33 %). “Successful businessmen” (12 % and 15 %), musicians (8 % and 9 %), actors (6 % and 7 %) and politicians (4 % and 5 %) were the least mentioned groups, and the ‘potential’ of the last group is even less than of the fairy-tale characters from adventure films (8 %) or of movie superheroes (8 % and 7 %). There are no significant generational differences, but adolescents more often name successful businessmen, politicians, policemen, musicians and actors as an example for children, while the oldest group — soldiers of the Great Patriotic War and astronauts; in 2022, respondents under 30 less often named such soldiers.

The questionnaire also included questions about cinema as a popularizer of examples/forms of heroic behavior [14]. In 2020, respondents were asked to name five films in which the characters accomplish feats/heroic deeds, a specific character and an act that made him a hero, which character’s life they would like to live, and what character they wanted to be like. Respondents either found it difficult to answer these questions or provided very varied answers. Therefore, in 2022, this group of open questions was replaced by two questions: “Which movie characters you consider the most repulsive?” and “What movies the Russian society lacks/needs today?”. The ‘ranking’ of repulsive characters is headed by traitors (43 % in 2020, 41 % in 2022); almost every third named narcissistic/arrogant characters (31 %), cowards (30 % and 28 %), greedy/mercenary (29 % and 27 %) or cruel ones (30 % and 23 %); every fourth — flattering (26 % and 24 %), extremely stupid (25 % and 20 %), envious (24 % and 26 %), spoiled (23 %) and selfish (22 % and 26 %); every fifth — indifferent to others’ problems (21 %), cynical (20 % and 18 %), alarmists (18 %), too positive (18 % and 20 %), vindictive (17 % and 18 %) and power-hungry (17 % and 18 %); 16 % named boring characters, 14 % — lazy, 13 % — irresponsible in relation to work, i.e., respondents consider mainly actively and negatively disgusting characters as the most repulsive. Least often were named those who cannot stand up for themselves, quiet, infantile, apathetic/depressive, faceless/unremarkable or, on the contrary, rude and unceremonious characters (every tenth), even more rarely — too optimistic, curious or absent-minded (6 %), i.e., characters that are generally considered neutral or too positive.

Concerning the movies that the Russian society lacks/needs, respondents named primarily movies about honest and kind people (about 44 %) and

friendship (37 %); every third — movies about simple workers, people who inspire others by their lives, and about Russian history; every fourth — about patriotism and fighters against injustice; every fifth — about military heroism, science, today's society and teenagers; every seventh — about children; every tenth — about the elderly and Russian superheroes, i.e., there is an obvious social demand for movies about the everyday life of simple, honest and kind people in the past and present, about people who can make friends, work and inspire others with their selfless professional or social activities. This confirms that the above-reconstructed image of the 'hero-rescuer' is priority and common for all Russian generations — the one who accomplishes heroic deeds and is capable of self-sacrifice not out of a sense of duty but at the call of the heart, and this choice can make the hero happy. There are some generational differences, mainly between the youngest and the oldest groups: although all respondents give priority to the 'hero-rescuer', the youngest tend to more peaceful/everyday interpretations of heroism, putting the 'hero-philanthropist' in the second place, while the oldest give priority to the 'hero-warrior'.

Notes

- (1) Many Americans find their heroes in family members. URL: <https://theharrispoll.com/new-york-n-y-november-6-2014-when-the-harris-poll-asked-american-adults-to-consider-the-top-three-people-they-admire-enough-to-call-a-hero-of-those-who-answered-three-out-of-ten-listed-a-fam>.
- (2) U.S. Department of the Interior. URL: <https://www.doi.gov/american-heroes/heroes>.
- (3) Hero of our time. 2007. URL: <http://gtmarket.ru/news/culture/2007/10/02/2203>. (In Russ.).
- (4) Russia's historical figures with the greatest influence on the national fate. URL: <http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/istd2>. (In Russ.).
- (5) Ranking of heroes. 2009. URL: https://bd.fom.ru/report/whatsnew/press_r91209. (In Russ.).
- (6) Doctor, lifeguard and military man: a hero of our time. URL: <https://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=10058>. (In Russ.).
- (7) Kirkorov, Khabib, Prilepin and Dud: Russians named the people of the year. URL: <https://www.ridus.ru/news/343904>. (In Russ.).
- (8) Results of 2021 and expectations for 2022. URL: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/itogi-2021-goda-i-ozhidaniya-ot-2022-go>. (In Russ.).
- (9) The most outstanding figures in history. URL: <https://www.levada.ru/2021/06/21/samyevydayushhiesya-lichnosti-v-istorii>. (In Russ.).
- (10) Results of 2022: Events, heroes, plans for the New Year holidays. URL: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/itogi-2022-sobytiya-geroi-plany-na-novogodnie-prazdniki>. (In Russ.).
- (11) Heroes of the year. 2020. <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/geroi-goda-2020>. (In Russ.).
- (12) Russian schoolchildren named their heroes. URL: <https://russian.rt.com/russia/news/834111-shkolniki-opros-geroi>. (In Russ.).

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Представления россиян о героях и героизме: устойчивые и изменчивые компоненты (по материалам опросов общественного мнения)*

И.В. Троцук^{1,2,3}, М.В. Субботина¹

¹Российский университет дружбы народов,
ул. Миклухо-Маклая, 6, Москва, 117198, Россия

²Российская академия народного хозяйства и государственной службы при Президенте РФ,
просп. Вернадского, 82, Москва, 119571, Россия

³Национальный исследовательский университет «Высшая школа экономики»,
ул. Мясницкая, 20, Москва, 101000, Россия

(e-mail: irina.trotsuk@yandex.ru; mariya.subbotina.1995@mail.ru)

Аннотация. Несмотря на весьма обширный список исследованных аспектов героизма, в социологии данный феномен по-прежнему недостаточно изучен. Большинство проектов и публикаций ориентированы скорее на поиск самих «героев» (вернее идентификацию таких в общественном мнении или медийном дискурсе), но не дают ответов на вопрос, почему

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(со) общества «назначают» одних людей героями, а других нет, и какой смысл вкладывают в понятие «герой». Общество всегда обращало пристальное внимание на так называемых «выдающихся личностей»: официальные и народные герои существуют во всех культурах, и на протяжении не одного тысячелетия человеческой истории выступают своего рода референтной группой для принятия решений и даже самоопределения людей. Кроме того, доминирование конкретных типов героического поведения — один из инструментов (само)репрезентации культурной системы: превалирующий в сознании общества героический типаж нередко напрямую связан с характерным для данного социума этическим комплексом. Авторы систематизируют сложившиеся на сегодняшний день трактовки понятий «герой» и «героизм», а также разработанные типологии героического поведения, обозначают современные направления эмпирического изучения героизма, прежде всего, массовые опросы российских и зарубежных ученых. Во второй части статьи представлены результаты всероссийского репрезентативного онлайн-опроса, в котором приняли участие представители четырех возрастных групп: 14–19 лет, 20–29, 30–49 и 50–69 лет (800 человек, по 200 респондентов в каждой возрастной группе). Опрос был призван выявить и сопоставить представления разных российских поколений о героях и героизме. Было проведено две волны опроса — в 2020 и 2022 году, поэтому авторы сосредоточились на изменениях, которые прослеживаются в представлениях россиян. В целом старшее поколение в качестве приоритетных героических типов называет героя-спасателя и героя-воина, тогда как младшее поколение — героя-спасателя и героя-благотворителя. Что касается сопоставления двух опросных волн, то в 2022 году респонденты менее охотно отвечают на вопросы о героях и героизме, особенно когда речь заходит о проявлениях военного героизма, но ключевые социальные представления о героическом сохраняются.

Ключевые слова: герой; героизм; типы героического поведения; типы героев; социальные представления; онлайн-опрос; поколенческое измерение; российское общество; сравнительный анализ