

Box 13.1: Russian public has a higher opinion of research profession

Public opinion surveys conducted by the Higher School of Economics over the past five years reveal that Russians have an increasingly positive view of the impact of science and technology on their daily lives.

This was the case for 88% of citizens in 2018, for instance, up from 83% in 2016. Moreover, seven-tenths (70%) of respondents were of the view that future scientific and technological progress would be more beneficial than harmful for society.

Although most Russians (62%) would welcome their child's decision

to become a researcher, this is a lower proportion than in the USA or Israel (80%) where science has an extremely positive public image.

The majority of Russian university students (61%) intend to pursue a career in business; only one-tenth are contemplating a career in science. The main reasons cited are material considerations.

Importantly, it seems that public views about the desirability of scientific careers are shifting. Only 28% believed that researchers earned less than other professions in 2019, down from 42% in 2014.

This is a remarkable shift in public perception in just five years. It suggests that government efforts to boost researchers' salaries and, thereby, improve the appeal of a scientific career, have achieved the desired result.

There is still work to do, however, when it comes to changing popular stereotypes: more than half (54%) of those surveyed in 2018 considered research to be a boring occupation.

Source: HSE (2017, 2018 and 2019a)

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