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In Search of Patriotic Activism: Between Declaration and Reality



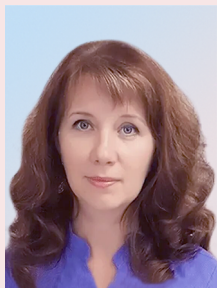
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Abstract. The historical period marked by a shift in the world order and the transition from a unipolar to a multipolar system presents the world's key nations with a set of existential challenges related to spiritual, moral, and cultural self-determination over the strategic horizon. This challenge is especially urgent for Russia, which, since the start of the special military operation in Ukraine, has been undergoing a comprehensive transformation of all spheres of life. At the heart of this transformation lies a rejection of the liberal-capitalist paradigm and the adoption of a sovereign course of national development, based on traditional cultural and moral values and on the country's self-definition as a civilization-state. Although recent legislation has outlined the contours of Russia's desired future, these contours still require further specification, as evidenced by ongoing debates around such concepts as ideology, the image of the future, and so forth. One such concept is patriotism — a term that Presidential Decree 809 of November 9, 2022,

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includes in the list of traditional values that shape the worldview of Russia's citizens. This circumstance lends urgency to scholarly inquiry into the content and key characteristics of patriotism and into how it is perceived today by various groups of Russian society. The present study aims to contribute to this inquiry. Its objective was to identify the relationship between the level of patriotic self-identification and subjective assessments of the population's civic engagement – including people's sense of responsibility for the state of affairs at different levels of social life – drawing on the case of the Vologda Region, one of Russia's federal subjects. The empirical basis of the paper includes the findings of a sociological survey conducted by the Vologda Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences in the region in April 2025 (N = 1,500). The data were processed using cross-tabulation analysis, with Cramér's V coefficient computed to gauge the strength and significance of the associations among the nominal variables. The analysis yielded a socio-demographic profile of the respondents who identify themselves as patriots, and an assessment was made of the relationship between the degree of patriotic self-identification across different categories of citizens. In substantive terms, people's perceptions of patriotism were found to be dominated by the worldview component, which prevails over the activity component – a pattern manifesting itself in the combination of a high degree of patriotic self-identification with a relatively low level of civic engagement. The study also compares the data obtained with the results of similar surveys conducted at both the federal and regional levels. Our contribution lies in developing a methodological approach to investigating the characteristics and perceptions of citizens regarding patriotism that rests on empirical data, thereby making it possible to use this approach for comparative analysis in similarly themed research projects, as well as in the practice of public administration.

Key words: patriotism, activism, responsibility, civic engagement, attitudes, homeland, region, identity, values.

Introduction

The Special Military Operation, always aimed at protecting people who, for eight years, “have been facing humiliation and genocide perpetrated by the Kiev regime...” as well as the demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine¹, effectively became a trigger for global transformations, initiating an active phase of the irreversible shift from a unipolar to a multipolar world order. During this “transitional” period, key countries worldwide face the question of civilizational choice, which will determine their fate for decades, perhaps even centuries, to come.

This challenge is doubly relevant for the Russian Federation, as the civilizational conflict, active

phase of which began in 2022, is accompanied by a radical restructuring of the country's internal development, driven by the rejection of the liberal-democratic model that existed for the past 30 years. Essentially, Russia has known no other model since the dissolution of the USSR; however, it has been publicly acknowledged today at the highest level of state governance that this “path involved covert interventions aimed at subordinating Russia to the interests of other nations that believed they had the right to do so”².

Nevertheless, although it has been determined that Russia is no longer “the West”, the question “who are Russians?” remains relevant. It is logical

¹ Address by the President of the Russian Federation on February 24, 2022. Official website of the RF President. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>

² Speech by V. Putin at the plenary session of the Valdai International Discussion Club on November 7, 2024. Official website of the RF President. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/75521>

that there are heated debates in scientific and public areas regarding concepts such as “ideology”, “vision of the future”, “social contract”, and so on. Crucially, the framework of this discourse has been delineated by the state – not only in public statements but also at the legislative level³. This framework can be defined by the concepts of national sovereignty, patriotism, Russia as a “state-civilization”, traditional spiritual and moral values.

Our research focuses on the concept of “patriotism”. Although Russian legislation lacks a clear definition, the President has repeatedly stated that “we do not have and cannot have any other unifying idea other than patriotism”⁴, that “solidarity and patriotism have always been the greatest values”⁵ for Russians, and that “being a patriot means not only to treat one’s national history with love and respect, although, of course, that is very important, but first and foremost to serve one’s country and society”⁶.

Patriotic sentiments in society have always been the subject of special research in Russian humanities; however, the Special Military Operation in Ukraine shifted the focus, initiating a new body of work dedicated to this phenomenon. These studies document the “rally-under-the-flag”

effect (Vinogradova, 2024; Kosygina, 2023) and note the prevalence of “committed” patriots over “moderate” ones. Comparing data from 2020 and 2024 on the prevalence of various types of patriotism suggests a qualitative transformation: in 2020 the system of patriotic attitudes among Russians was in a stable state with a dominance of modernist tendencies, while in 2024 a “flip” of the entire system of patriotic beliefs into a qualitatively different but equally stable state was recorded, this time with a dominance of traditionalist tendencies (Kuznetsov, 2024).

The results of recent nationwide sociological surveys confirm that the vast majority of citizens identify themselves as patriots. According to VCIOM 2024 polls, 94% of Russians call themselves patriots of Russia⁷. The dynamics of indicators is also positive: in 2025, 61% of citizens noted that in the past year they felt they were proud of Russia more frequently than before⁸. Patriotism ranks among the top three key values of the population⁹. Moreover, every second respondent (52%) believes that the Special Military Operation has rather contributed to the consolidation of Russian society¹⁰. A significant role in maintaining this trend is played by state and public institutions implementing relevant projects, programs, and public events (Borshchevskiy, 2024; Polyakov, 2025).

At the same time, a body of theoretical and empirical research indicates the existence of substantial differences between patriotism as an emotional attitude and patriotism as an activity.

³ See, for example: RF Constitution amended on July 4, 2020; On the approval of basic principles of national policy on the preservation and strengthening of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values: Presidential Decree 809, dated November 9, 2022; On the approval of the concept of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation: Presidential Decree 229, dated March 31, 2023; On the approval of basic principles of national policy of the Russian Federation in the field of historical education: Presidential Decree 314, dated May 8, 2024, etc.

⁴ Speech by V. Putin at a meeting with the core group of the Leaders Club on February 3, 2016. Official website of the RF President. Available at: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51263>

⁵ Speech by V. Putin at the ceremony of presenting Hero of Labour medals and Russian Federation National Awards on June 12, 2026. Official website of the RF President. Available at: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/80016>

⁶ Address of the RF President to the Federal Assembly on December 12, 2012. Official website of the RF President. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/36699>

⁷ On modern Russian patriotism. 2024. VCIOM. URL: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/o-sovremennom-rossiiskom-patriotizme>

⁸ Russians are proud of their country! VCIOM. 01.09.2025. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/u-rossiiskikh-sobstvennaja-gordost>

⁹ Traditions in the era of change. VCIOM. 29.12.2023. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/tradicii-v-ehpokhu-peremen>

¹⁰ Our strength is unity! VCIOM. 01.11.2025. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/sila-v-edinstve>

A patriotically inclined citizen may express verbal support for patriotic values and attitudes while avoiding active practices in everyday life (Chang, Guo, 2022). However, true patriotism includes not only an emotional attitude or understanding of the value of national identity but also its active defense through deeds (Ivchenkova, Bukhanskii, 2024). Based on this, we consider it necessary to quantitatively assess the gap between patriotic attitudes and their potential realization in people's behavior.

The subject of this study is the relationship between patriotic self-identification and behavioral manifestations (activism, responsibility, influence) at different levels of social organization. The aim of the work was to identify the relationship between the level of patriotic self-identification and self-assessed parameters of civic engagement, responsibility, and subjective perceptions of one own's influence at various levels of social organization, using one of Russia's regions – the Vologda Region – as a case study.

Theoretical framework of the study

In the foreign research tradition, the works of R.T. Schatz and E. Staub made a significant contribution to understanding active patriotism, distinguishing between “blind” and “constructive” patriotism (Schatz et al., 1999; Staub, 2015). “Constructive” patriotism implies critical reflection on the country's problems and readiness for active action to solve them, whereas “blind” patriotism is limited to emotional attachment and uncritical loyalty. This distinction is directly relevant to our research subject, as it allows differentiating passive forms of patriotic identity from those that have the potential to translate into activity.

It is important to note the evolution of Western discourse, associated with its prolonged convergence with nationalism (national-patriotism), which was expressed in the idealization of the nation, a sense of national superiority, and aspirations for

dominance (Viroli, 1997), subsequently giving rise to the concept of “cosmopolitan patriotism” as a reaction to these tendencies (Bader, 1999). In the context of patriotism, cosmopolitanism is based on loyalty to humanity as a whole and is contrasted with local/national patriotism (Nussbaum, 1996; Kuznetsova, Kuznetsov, 2015; Karnyshev, 2017). On the contrary, D. Miller argues that civic democracy is impossible without patriotism as a mechanism of social solidarity, and cosmopolitan identity cannot substitute national attachment (Miller, 1995).

The features of Russian patriotism include its rootedness in traditional values and strong connection with the local level (Polomoshnov, Polomoshnov, 2024), which substantiates reference to domestic research.

The sociological approach in Russian academic discourse is oriented toward the study of patriotism in all its aspects empirically captured in public consciousness. Within this framework, patriotism is viewed as a form of social attitude with emotional, value-based (cognitive), and activity-based (behavioral) components in its structure (Ivchenkova, Bukhanskii, 2024; Šuvaković, Trotsuk, 2013). From the perspective of the present study, the activity-based component is central, and it requires analyzing not only perceptions of proper behavior but also actual practices. In this regard, it is necessary to consider the theory of social action. According to the activity-based approach, developed by A. Touraine (Touraine, 1998), patriotism is revealed through helping relationships in the objective environment (Reshetnikov, Reshetnikova, 2020), which allows patriotic activity to be viewed not as an abstract category but as actual practices of human interaction with the surrounding world.

From a methodological viewpoint, the approach of I.A. Khalii (Khalii, 2017a; Khalii, 2017b) is of great value for this study. Based on the results of an empirical study conducted in nine regions of

European Russia in 2013–2015, the author proposes a typology of attitudes toward motherland, which includes three types: unconditional patriotism, transformative love, and indifferent attitude. The second type – transformative love – is essential for our research. It includes not only an emotional attitude but also a readiness for active action for the greater good of the country, region, or local community. This type is closest to understanding patriotism as an active position, as it combines value-based attitudes with practical involvement. It is worth noting that transformative love can be directed toward objects of different levels – from the whole country to one’s own yard or city – and it manifests itself most clearly at the local level (Khaliy, 2017b).

Also key is the concept of social action by O.V. Aksenova, a colleague of A.I. Khaliy, who distinguishes between “actor action”, “actor social action” (initiative, meaningful activity in which the individual acts as a full-fledged actor), and “technological social action” (activity based on following external prescriptions and administrative algorithms) (Aksenova, 2020; Aksenova, 2016). This dichotomy corresponds to our task of differentiating patriotic activism from ritualized loyalty.

Although the present study does not focus on youth, theoretical developments in this area are important for understanding the dynamics of patriotic attitudes in general. The works of Yu.A. Zubok, V.I. Chuprov, and colleagues show that patriotism and civic identity are formed not linearly but through mechanisms of self-regulation of life purpose values in the cultural space, with collectivist attitudes important for patriotic identity being closely linked to an active life position, and the nature of this relationship varying across different age cohorts (Zubok et al., 2021; Zubok, Chuprov, 2019).

Furthermore, the concept of patriotism is connected with value studies. According to

M. Rokeach’s classification of values, patriotism belongs to terminal values, as it can be considered a value associated with the goals of individual existence aimed at prosperity of the country, its history, culture, population, and other aspects significant to the individual or society (Rokeach, 1973). R. Inglehart classified patriotism as a traditional value. Within his theory and methodology based on World Values Survey (WVS) data, he identified two main axes of classification. The first axis – traditional values versus secular-rational values – reflects the shift from religiosity, strong family, and national pride toward greater secularization and rationality. The other axis – survival values versus self-expression values – involves a transition from an emphasis on safety, material goods, and survival to values of self-realization, minority rights, participation in decision-making, and environmental responsibility. Patriotism falls into the group of traditional values, which are contrasted with secular-rational ones. So, for Inglehart, patriotism is associated with conservative, historically established attitudes that may persist in society if priority is given to traditions and national interests (Inglehart, 1997).

As A.P. Pavlov notes, “the object of patriotism has changed depending on the individual’s social environment and the stage of social evolution” (Pavlov, 2018, p. 176). The classification proposed by the scholar is based on the concept of “object of loyalty”, understood as an element of reality connected with a social feeling. Within this classification, the researcher identifies types of patriotism (tribal; local; national; state; class-based; corporate) corresponding to specific objects of loyalty (family, tribe; village, city; nation, people; state; social class; organization). This classification demonstrates the dynamic nature of the perception of patriotism and allows for an expanded interpretation of its object of attention, creating foundations for a multidimensional and

differentiated understanding of the essence of patriotism. This is particularly important for empirical research, as it allows considering the varying orientations of patriotic activity – from care for one's yard to service to the state.

At the same time, a methodological problem is the distinction between patriotic activity and related forms of activity. Many researchers tend toward a broad interpretation, integrating diverse practices of social participation into the concept of patriotic activity (Lubsky, 2019; Chuprov et al., 2014). In this context, patriotic activity substantively converges with civic/social activity, defined as actions by citizens aimed at addressing socially significant problems (Patrushev, 2009). R.V. Parma, based on empirical data, identifies the leading motives of social activity: the opportunity to be useful to others, fulfill one's civic duty, solve common problems together, and achieve self-realization (Parma, 2022). Unlike civic activity, patriotic activity in the strict sense is based on the dominance of patriotic motives in the motivational structure, which significantly narrows the range of practices which correspond to this category. However, in actual citizen behavior, patriotic and civic motives are often intertwined, requiring a more flexible approach to their conceptualization.

Researchers have demonstrated the staged nature of patriotic activity development. For example, Yu.N. Trifonov and A.V. Kuz'min note that at the final stage of forming love for motherland, the patriotic attitude is realized in practice through specific actions and deeds, which become the content of patriotic activity (Kuz'min, Trifonov, 2016). Similarly, D.E. Yakovlev and G.F. Shilova think that "contemporary patriotism should be based on activities, transforming feelings and emotions into social action for the benefit of motherland" (Yakovlev, Shilova, 2016, p. 93). Their

research allows patriotic activity to be viewed not as an isolated element but as a natural stage in the development of patriotic consciousness, which is of fundamental importance for understanding the gap between declarative patriotism and the real involvement of citizens.

For the purposes of this study, it seems beneficial to adopt a broad approach to patriotic activity, which substantively converges with civic engagement and extends to multiple objects of care, including the local community, the birthplace, and the social environment. In this case, patriotic activity is understood as diverse, active participation in improving the living conditions of society and individual citizens, where patriotic values may be present among other motivational bases.

The research question (hypothesis) is as follows: is there a statistically significant relationship between the level of patriotic self-identification and actual civic engagement, or does high self-identification coexist with passivity, suggesting a predominance of declarative patriotism over activity-based patriotism?

Materials and methods

The study is empirically based on data from a sociological survey conducted in April 2025 by the Vologda Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences in the Vologda Region. A quota sampling method was employed, controlling for proportions across three criteria: type of settlement (urban/rural), gender, and age of respondents. This design allows representing the general adult population of the region. The sample size was 1500 respondents. The research tool was a standardized questionnaire, with blocks of questions aimed at identifying socio-political attitudes, value orientations, and practices of civic and patriotic participation. Questions that allow analyzing key indicators in stages were selected from the general dataset.

At the first stage, patriotic self-identification was determined through respondents' answers to the question: "Do you consider yourself a patriot?" (response options: "definitely yes", "rather yes", "rather no", "definitely no"). Based on this question, four groups were constructed. For the analysis of the socio-demographic profile, these categories were aggregated into two broad groups: "patriots" and "non-patriots".

At the second stage, respondents' perceptions of patriotism were identified by analyzing responses to questions about concepts of motherland and patriotism, satisfaction with life in Russia, and actions that manifest patriotism, divided into active and passive forms.

At the third stage, behavioral manifestations of patriotism were assessed: self-assessment of social activity (10-point scale), sense of responsibility, and self-assessment of respondents' influence at different levels (from home to the country). A limitation related to the measurement of the activity-based component of patriotism should be noted. The research tool measures not actual practices of civic participation but attitudes toward these practices and respondents' self-assessments of their own activity, responsibility, and influence. For example, the questionnaire records opinions on whether military service is a manifestation of patriotism but does not record actual service experience. Similarly, respondents assess their degree of participation in public life on a subjective scale and their sense of responsibility for the state of affairs, rather than their involvement in specific actions. The distinction between declared attitudes and actual behavior is the key subject of analysis, but the study itself, due to its design, is focused on examining attitudes and self-assessments.

The study employed cross-tabulation analysis to identify relationships between patriotic self-identification and the attitudes and practices under study. To assess the value and significance of the

relationship between nominal variables, Cramér's V was used, with statistical significance assessed at $p < 0.05$. This coefficient is taken due to its robustness to violations of normality and its applicability to contingency tables of any size. This approach allowed not only recording differences between groups with various levels of patriotic self-identification but also to determine the statistical significance of these patterns.

Results

Before turning to the identification of relationships, it is necessary to examine the profile of patriots and non-patriots. Among patriots, there is a slight predominance of women (57%). Middle-aged and older individuals are more patriotically inclined. At the same time, age is not a differentiating factor in identifying oneself as a patriot: the gap between the two groups is minimal. Material well-being and level of education are pronounced markers of difference between the groups. In total, 83% of self-assessed patriots consider themselves to be people with average or high incomes. Among the "non-patriot" group, the proportion of badly-off citizens is significantly higher. In addition, there is a pronounced territorial polarization: patriots are more likely to reside in large cities (Vologda and Cherepovets). Among those who do not consider themselves patriots, the majority are residents of districts and municipalities of the region (66%; *Tab. 1*).

A relationship was identified between the level of patriotic self-identification of the regional community and the concept of motherland. The Cramér's V ($V = 0.200$, $p < 0.001$) indicates the presence of a statistically significant relationship between the two nominal variables: self-assessment of patriotism and motherland identification. The higher the level of patriotic self-identification, the more often respondents name Russia as their unconditional motherland. Conditional patriotism is most widespread among groups with moderate or

unstable identity. Respondents who lack confidence defining their patriotic attitude are more likely than others to associate the feeling of motherland with the possibility of improving living conditions. A pragmatic approach to defining motherland prevails among those who do not consider themselves patriots. For this group, key factors are personal comfort and quality of life, rather than territorial or

cultural belonging. There is an increase in reflexive uncertainty as patriotic identity decreases. Those who rather do not consider themselves patriots are more likely to either not think about their personal motherland or find it difficult to answer, which may indicate a gap between official patriotic discourse and respondents' personal meanings (Tab. 2).

Table 1. Socio-demographic profile of groups with different levels of patriotic self-identification, %

Socio-demographic feature	Do you consider yourself a patriot?		Gap patriots / non-patriots, p.p.
	Patriots (Definitely yes or rather yes)	Non-patriots (Definitely no or rather no)	
Gender			
Male	43.5	49.3	-6
Female	56.5	50.7	+6
Age			
under 30	14.0	14.4	0
30–55	46.3	45.8	1
over 55	39.7	39.8	0
Education			
High school or middle school	31.9	50.2	-18
Vocational school	37.7	30.3	+7
Higher and incomplete higher education	30.4	19.4	+11
Income groups			
Bottom 20%	16.8	36.1	-19
Middle 60%	61.2	54.1	+7
Top 20%	22.0	9.8	+12
Place of residence			
Vologda	29.7	19.4	+10
Cherepovets	28.6	14.4	+14
Districts / okrugs	41.7	66.2	-25
Vologda Region average	85.2	13.4	-72
Source: VoIRC RAS sociological survey data.			

Source: VolRC RAS sociological survey data.

Table 2. Distribution of responses to the question “Where is your motherland?” by patriotic self-identification, %

Response option	Do you consider yourself a patriot?			
	Definitely yes	Rather yes	Rather no	Definitely no
How would you answer the question “Where is your motherland?”				
I think Russia is my motherland	86.9	66.5	40.6	41.7
I would like to consider Russia my motherland, provided that living conditions there are better than in other countries	4.1	10.9	14.5	11.1
I think motherland is where I feel comfortable and live well, regardless of where I was born	1.7	7.8	19.4	30.6
I've thought about it, but I'm still undecided	1.8	3.7	7.9	5.6
I haven't thought about this question	5.4	11.1	17.6	11.1

Cramér's V = 0.200 (p < 0.001) – moderate relationship.

Source: VolRC RAS sociological survey data.

Table 3. Satisfaction with life in the Russian Federation by patriotic self-identification, %

Response option	Do you consider yourself a patriot?			
	Definitely yes	Rather yes	Rather no	Definitely no
How do you assess satisfaction with your life in the Russian Federation?				
Fully satisfied	39.7	10.3	5.5	5.6
Rather satisfied	37.8	50.9	24.2	22.2
Rather dissatisfied	7.8	16.2	29.7	44.4
Completely dissatisfied	1.7	5.6	7.3	13.9
Not sure	13.0	17.0	33.3	13.9
Cramér's V = 0.220 ($p < 0.001$) – moderate relationship. Source: VolRC RAS sociological survey data.				

Developing this topic, it is worth noting that a comparative analysis of perceptions of quality of life in Russia among groups of respondents with different levels of patriotism is of particular interest. A relationship is observed: as patriotic feelings intensify, the level of satisfaction with one's life in Russia increases. For example, among those who definitely consider themselves patriots, the absolute majority (78%) are "fully or rather satisfied". In contrast, among those who deny their patriotic identity, a negative assessment of the quality of life in Russia dominates (*Tab. 3*). Thus, patriotism and life satisfaction are not isolated but closely interrelated socio-psychological characteristics, where stronger patriotic identity correlates with a sense of higher levels of social well-being.

The results of the study reveal an association between the population's self-assessment of their patriotism and the specific actions and deeds they identify as manifestations of patriotism. The higher the level of patriotic self-identification, the more often respondents tend to associate patriotism with concrete, institutional, and emotionally charged forms of activity. Conversely, among those who do not consider themselves patriots, the proportion of those who are not sure is significantly higher, which may indicate either a critical rethinking of the concept or a dissociation from official rhetoric.

The most pronounced difference between groups is observed regarding traditional, ritualized forms of patriotism. For example, military service and

readiness to defend motherland as a key attribute of patriotism is highlighted by 58% among those who definitely consider themselves patriots, whereas among those who rather do not consider themselves patriots, this figure drops to 29%, and among those who definitely do not, it stands at 25%. A similar, though less pronounced, trend is recorded regarding support for the president and Russia's leadership: 36% versus 17%, respectively. Essentially, for respondents with high patriotic self-identification, patriotism is closely associated with loyalty to state institutions and readiness to defend them.

At the same time, emotional-value components remain significant for all groups. Love and pride for the country are among the most frequent responses across all categories; however, as the level of self-identification decreases, their significance diminishes. We suggest that even the population that denies its patriotism does not exclude an emotional connection with the country but interprets patriotism differently – more as an internal feeling that does not require external expression.

The division of perceptions into active and passive forms shows that the group of those who definitely consider themselves patriots is more likely to name both active and passive manifestations. At the same time, active forms – such as military service, active citizenship, or preservation of historical memory – are most characteristic of this group. Meanwhile, for those who do not consider themselves patriots, either passive forms or the

absence of a definite position is more significant. The response option “good, conscientious work for the benefit of the country” stands out, with higher values among “definitely not patriots” (25%). It is notable that forms such as participation in patriotic events or support for Russian athletes receive minimal support across all groups, suggesting that these are perceived as secondary or temporary.

Cramér’s V coefficients calculated for the most frequent variables demonstrate a statistically significant, though weak, relationship between patriotic self-identification and perceptions of patriotism manifestations (Cramér’s V ranging from 0.151 to 0.188, $p < 0.001$ in all cases). Therefore, differences between groups are not random; however, patriotic self-identification is not the sole or determining factor in shaping these perceptions. The strongest relationship is recorded for the variable “military service, readiness to defend motherland” ($V = 0.188$), confirming its role as a marker distinguishing groups with different levels of patriotic self-identification (*Tab. 4*).

Due to the methodological characteristics of the research tool, the analysis of patriotic activity was based on a broad interpretation of the concept, encompassing manifestations of social and civic engagement of the region’s population. It was established that respondents with pronounced patriotic self-identification are more likely to be involved in socio-political practices. For example, among those who confidently consider themselves patriots, 27% assess their participation in social life as “active” or “rather active”, whereas among those who doubt their patriotism, this figure drops to 12–15%. However, even among committed patriots, the proportion of those actively engaged in public affairs remains relatively small. Moreover, 46% of respondents in this group openly state their social passivity. Self-assessment of participation is weakly but statistically significantly related to self-assessment of patriotism (Cramér’s $V = 0.122$, $p < 0.001$). The data obtained do not allow us to argue that patriotism is a key driver of political activity (*Tab. 5*).

Table 4. Perceptions of manifestations of patriotism by patriotic self-identification, %

Response option	Do you consider yourself a patriot?			
	Definitely yes	Rather yes	Rather no	Definitely no
If we talk about residents of Russia, what actions and deeds do primarily demonstrate patriotism?				
Active forms of patriotism				
Military service, readiness to defend motherland	57.8	38.5	21.8	25.0
Active citizenship, participation in the affairs of Russia	29.0	17.8	17.0	19.4
Good, conscientious work for the benefit of Russia	14.2	18.4	10.3	25.0
Participation in elections, rallies	13.5	12.8	5.5	8.3
Preservation of historical and cultural memory, participation in commemorative events	21.6	23.4	17.0	25.0
Participation in patriotic events, concerts	6.0	4.6	1.2	2.8
Passive forms of patriotism				
Lack of desire to leave Russia	47.8	34.6	23.0	30.6
Love, respect, pride for Russia	57.3	48.2	35.2	41.7
Support for the President and Russia’s leadership	36.0	24.0	18.2	16.7
Interest in events in Russia, participation in their discussion	16.2	22.1	11.5	27.8
Resilience, readiness to overcome hardships	8.8	11.4	9.7	2.8
Support for domestic producers	17.5	16.6	13.9	11.1
Support for Russian athletes	5.1	9.3	9.1	2.8
Not sure	15.6	18.6	45.5	33.3
Note: Cramér’s V coefficients range from 0.151 to 0.188, indicating a weak relationship between patriotic self-identification and perceptions of patriotism manifestations. In all cases, $p < 0.001$, the relationship is statistically significant. Source: VolRC RAS sociological survey data.				

Table 5. Self-assessments of participation in public and political life by patriotic self-identification, %

Response option	Do you consider yourself a patriot?			
	Definitely yes	Rather yes	Rather no	Definitely no
How would you assess the degree of your participation in public and political life?				
Active or rather active	27.1	15.5	12.1	22.3
Rather passive or passive	46.1	64.0	76.4	61.1
Not sure	26.8	20.5	11.5	16.7
Cramér's V = 0.122 ($p < 0.001$) – weak relationship. Source: VolRC RAS sociological survey data.				

A logical next step in the study was to analyze the degree and intensity of social activity. Analysis of self-assessed activity in the local community (on a 10-point scale) by patriotic self-identification revealed a positive relationship. The highest average participation score was recorded in the group of those who definitely consider themselves patriots (4.8), which predictably demonstrates their inclination to combine high patriotic identity with involvement in the local environment. At the same time, the group of absolute non-patriots shows an average score (4.4) exceeding that of groups with “mixed” identity: “rather yes” – 4.1 and especially “rather no” – 3.4¹¹. Also, the level of patriotism is higher among those engaged in socially significant practices (connected with sports, charity, volunteering, professional activities). Among non-participants, the share of “non-patriots” is maximal – 83%, while the proportion of committed patriots is 65%.

The study analyzed the relationship between the level of patriotic self-identification and perceptions of one's own responsibility, as well as the ability to influence the state of affairs at various levels of social organization: from the local to the national level.

Analysis of responses to the question about sense of responsibility reveals a general pattern across all groups of respondents: regardless of the level of patriotic identity, the sense of responsibility predictably diminishes as the object moves further

from the individual's immediate living space. The most pronounced sense of responsibility across all categories of respondents is recorded at the level of the house or yard (from 36 to 44%). At the same time, the sense of responsibility for the immediate environment is not related to patriotic self-identification (differences are statistically insignificant, $p > 0.05$). At the level of the city or district, the association becomes statistically significant but weak. Respondents who completely deny their patriotic identity are more likely than others to feel responsibility for their city or district. Contrary to expectations, those who unconditionally consider themselves patriots are not leaders in terms of sense of responsibility at any level. Overall, patriotic identification does not become a significant factor in the sense of responsibility at practically any level, except for the city and district (*Tab. 6*).

Respondents were asked whether they could personally influence the state of affairs (potential ability to influence). Unlike the sense of responsibility, a statistically significant, though weak, relationship with patriotic self-identification is recorded at most levels. At the house/yard level, the highest assessments are demonstrated by patriots. The differences are statistically significant (Cramér's V = 0.081, $p < 0.05$). In this context, patriotic identification is positively associated with belief in one's ability to influence at the local level. At the city/district level, the gaps become more pronounced. At the regional and national levels, the same pattern persists: among those who definitely

¹¹ The question was: “On a 10-point scale, assess your participation in the life of your community (yard, village, city) (where 1 – not involved at all, 10 – actively involved)”.

Table 6. Self-assessments of responsibility for the state of affairs at different levels by patriotic self-identification, %

Object of patriotism	Do you consider yourself a patriot?				Cramér's V
	Definitely yes	Rather yes	Rather no	Definitely no	
Do you feel responsible for the state of affairs?					
House/yard	41.5	39.8	35.8	44.4	0.056 (p > 0.05)
City/district	18.9	16.4	12.7	25.0	0.082 (p < 0.05)
Region	12.1	12.8	7.9	19.4	0.061 (p > 0.05)
Country	11.4	13.1	6.1	19.4	0.069 (p > 0.05)
Source: VoIRC RAS sociological survey data.					

Table 7. Self-assessments of potential ability to influence the state of affairs at different levels by patriotic self-identification, %

Object of patriotism	Do you consider yourself a patriot?				Cramér's V
	Definitely yes	Rather yes	Rather no	Definitely no	
Do you think you personally can influence the state of affairs today?					
House/yard	37.2	34.0	33.3	22.2	0.081 (p < 0.05)
City/district	13.5	11.0	4.2	13.9	0.109 (p < 0.001)
Region	9.1	8.3	4.8	8.3	0.079 (p < 0.05)
Country	9.2	8.5	5.5	8.3	0.077 (p < 0.05)
Source: VolRC RAS sociological survey data.					

and rather consider themselves patriots, similar indicators are observed (8–9%), while “rather non-patriots” show the lowest (5%; *Tab. 7*).

When assessing actual rather than potential influence, differences between groups become even more pronounced, especially at the local level. At the house/yard level, a predominance of patriotically inclined groups is observed. The differences are significant (Cramér's $V = 0.121$, $p < 0.001$) and confirm that patriotic identification

is a predictor, though weak, of the perception of real influence on affairs in one's house or yard. The most intriguing result is recorded at the regional and national levels. Here, the group of those who do not consider themselves patriots demonstrates high indicators of real influence (25% each), more than double the indicators of those who definitely consider themselves patriots (11% each), and these differences are also statistically significant (*Tab. 8*).

Table 8. Self-assessments of real influence on the state of affairs at different levels by patriotic self-identification, %

Object of patriotism	Do you consider yourself a patriot?				Cramér's V
	Definitely yes	Rather yes	Rather no	Definitely no	
Do you think you personally influence the state of affairs today?					
House/yard	34.8	31.9	13.3	22.3	0.121 (p < 0.001)
City/district	18.9	19.3	7.3	19.4	0.114 (p < 0.001)
Region	11.4	12.0	7.2	25.0	0.089 (p < 0.001)
Country	11.2	11.0	7.1	25.0	0.087 (p < 0.001)
Source: VolRC RAS sociological survey data.					

It can be concluded that patriotic self-identification is weakly or absolutely not related to the sense of responsibility and the perception of influence on the state of affairs at different levels. It cannot be said that patriots differ significantly from non-patriots on these indicators.

Discussion

The findings generally correspond to the main trajectory identified in nationwide and regional studies of recent years. First, the thesis of the predominance of the worldview (emotional) component of patriotism over the activity-based component is confirmed (Chang, Guo, 2022). In the Vologda Region, the overwhelming majority of the population identifies as patriots (85% total); however, regular and initiative-driven civic engagement is characteristic of a minority. Even among those who definitely consider themselves patriots, only 27% assess their participation as active, while 46% report passivity. The predominance of the emotional component is also confirmed by data from an all-Russian survey conducted by the HSE Center for Studies of Civil Society and the Nonprofit Sector (2020). According to the survey results, two-thirds (67%) of respondents understood patriotism as love for motherland, whereas only one in four (26%) associated patriotism with concrete actions for the benefit of the country¹². In mass consciousness, patriotism is primarily a feeling, not an action.

Second, there is a regional specificity of the Vologda Region. It demonstrates a lower level of activity-based involvement compared to the Far Eastern regions (Republic of Buryatia, Trans-Baikal Territory, Primorye Territory), where researchers record a pronounced activity-based character of patriotism (24–32% of respondents are ready to personally defend the country, a significant portion

participates in patriotic events, with interregional variation of 43–65%) (Petrova, 2025). This may be related to the border location of the Far Eastern regions and, consequently, the activation of security factors, which is less typical for central Russia. The Vologda Region is located near metropolitan centers and, accordingly, is more influenced by state patriotic discourse, which stimulates initiative-driven action (“actor social action” in O.V. Aksenova’s terminology) more than ritualized forms of loyalty (“technological social action”).

The comparison of the survey results from the Vologda Region with data from a study in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) reveals some common patterns and differences. In both regions, education and material well-being are significant factors of patriotism, while age is not a determinant factor. The key difference is observed in the proportion of “pragmatic patriotism”. O.V. Vasil’eva identifies in Yakutia “unconditional patriots” (54%) and “pragmatic patriots” (47%). The latter are those willing to live in any country with better conditions (Vasil’eva, 2024). In the Vologda Region, the proportion of “pragmatic patriots” (motherland is “where I feel comfortable”) is only 7–11%. This difference can be explained by the more challenging climatic and economic conditions of Yakutia, where the quality of life factor plays a greater role.

Contrary to expectations, ethnic belonging does not significantly influence patriotism in multi-ethnic Yakutia: among Yakuts, 75% are patriots; among Russians, 76% (Vasil’eva, 2024). In mono-ethnic Vologda Region (97% Russian according to survey data), the ethnic factor is not relevant.

In Yakutia, the proportion of “non-patriots” is extremely small (5.5%) and cannot be analyzed in detail. In the Vologda Region, on the contrary, an interesting feature was identified: respondents who definitely do not consider themselves patriots demonstrate higher indicators of responsibility and influence (both at the regional and national

¹² Patriotism: Emotions or action? Center for Studies of Civil Society and the Nonprofit Sector, HSE University. 24.02.2021. Available at: <https://www.hse.ru/news/science/446471871.html>

levels) compared to those who definitely identify as patriots. This is one of the distinctions of the Vologda Region.

Third, a result requiring cautious interpretation was recorded. The group of those who definitely do not consider themselves patriots in a number of cases demonstrates relatively high indicators (e.g., regarding sense of responsibility). However, the relationships in these cases are weak, and the size of this subgroup in the sample is small. With a high degree of probability, the observed differences are due to the small size of the sub-sample. We are inclined to interpret this result as requiring additional verification on a more representative sample of respondents with low patriotic identity.

Conclusion

To sum up the results of the study, we note several features that require careful consideration and further investigation.

We interpret patriotism as one of the foundational spiritual and moral values constituting citizens' worldview (at least in the desired image of Russia's future), and it should be noted that our findings indicate a predominance of the worldview component over the activity-based component in its perception, confirming the hypothesis formulated earlier. The majority of the population with high patriotic self-identification demonstrates patriotic feelings and attitudes; however, regular and initiative-driven civic engagement is characteristic of a minority. At the same time, the absence of activity is also not recorded: at the local level, representatives of the patriotic group perceive themselves as having real influence on the state of affairs. So, patriotism is realized more as a potential, situational position connected with local activities than as systematic civic engagement.

Contrary to expectations, the differences recorded in the study between the “definitely not

patriots” group and other groups do not reveal a systematic pattern. The high indicators of responsibility and influence in this group have weak relationships (Cramér's $V = 0.087-0.089$) and can be explained by the small size of the sub-sample. Additional research is required to confirm or deny the existence of a distinct “critically minded but socially responsible” group.

The study also revealed an asymmetry in the distribution of the “responsibility” and “influence” indicators. While the sense of responsibility is not statistically significantly related to patriotic self-identification at most levels (except for the city/district, where the relationship is very weak), confidence in the ability to influence at the local level (house/yard) are weakly but statistically significantly related to patriotic identity. This is likely due to the fact that patriotic identity is closely associated with a sense of self-efficacy in the immediate social environment but does not correlate with a global sense of responsibility.

It was established that the most passive group is the “rather not patriots”. Across all dimensions and at most levels, this category demonstrates the lowest indicators of civic activity, responsibility, and belief in their influence. So, the gap in civic position is not between “patriots / non-patriots” but between “rather not patriots” and all other groups.

Overall, the patterns identified in this study require going beyond the quantitative logic of the research. Further development of the work includes the integration of qualitative methods, the expansion of behavioral indicators, a longitudinal design, and interregional comparisons. Such an approach will not only allow verification of the findings but also facilitate the transition to understanding the causal mechanisms linking patriotic identity with civic agency and responsibility, civic engagement.

It should also be noted that further research not only on patriotism (its understanding and perception by various socio-demographic groups) but also on all other traditional spiritual and moral values recorded in Presidential Decree 809, dated November 9, 2022, is a vital task for Russian science which, in our view, can (and has to) make a significant contribution to the unification and specification of the interpretation of these rather complex, multidimensional concepts which are nevertheless crucial elements of the image of Russia's future.

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