The war in Ukraine has made Russian social-media users glum

Posts on Twitter are far sadder today than at the start of the covid-19 pandemic. Based on past trends, this implies a one-point dip on the happiness index, which is measured by quantifying the frequency of words and ratings of the joy or sadness they convey. Applied to Russian-language Twitter, it accurately detects the shift in sentiment.

Data released since the conflict began show that mentions of “war,” “weapon,” “death” and other related terms have increased sharply, as have “scary,” “ashamed” and “horror.” Overall, posters’ mood has worsened eight times more than at the start of the covid-19 pandemic. Based on past trends, this implies a one-point dip on the happiness index, which is measured by quantifying the frequency of words and ratings of the joy or sadness they convey. Applied to Russian-language Twitter, it accurately detects the shift in sentiment.

The increased use of these terms may be driven by the domestic social network. And among the users who still manage to post may be unusually determined or computer-savvy. People who have evaded government restrictions over the past week were likely to have received internet access from relatives living abroad or from individuals willing to take them on. But that is not the only reason.

More data on the Russian home front are unreliable. The government has limited freedom of speech and arrested thousands of protesters. A recent poll found that those who still manage to post may be unusually determined or computer-savvy. People who have evaded government restrictions over the past week were likely to have received internet access from relatives living abroad or from individuals willing to take them on. But that is not the only reason.

This measure of users’ mood is imperfect. It is not a conventional poll run by Gallup, an American polling company, and it is not representative of the public at large. But it is a way to gauge the sentiment of an internet audience. It is also possible to estimate the mood of an audience by monitoring the content of its posts. This measure of users’ mood is imperfect. It is not a conventional poll run by Gallup, an American polling company, and it is not representative of the public at large. But it is a way to gauge the sentiment of an internet audience. It is also possible to estimate the mood of an audience by monitoring the content of its posts.