



The Institute for Conflict Studies and Analysis of Russia

What Russians were talking about in 2024 and at the beginning of 2025

Comprehensive AI-powered media analysis

Prepared by the Institute for Conflict Studies and Analysis of Russia. January 2025.

Research Methodology



Russian sentiment study results are based on data analysis using artificial intelligence. We examined posts and comments from social network users in 2024, as well as at the beginning of 2025 and analyzed publications of major media outlets and official comments on them.

The **aim of the study** is to identify the main topics that attracted interest of Russians in 2024, how they reacted to them, as well as how important these topics were for Russian propaganda and to what extent it tried to manipulate them.

We monitored keywords and phrases that reflect the above issues, along with related topics. This detailed analysis provides a clear understanding of Russian society's attitudes, the main topics of daily discussions, and the most common reactions of Russian citizens in the context of the full-scale aggression against Ukraine.

In particular, we investigated Russians' reactions to the course of military actions, the impact of the war on socio-economic and political processes in Russia, as well as the most resonant topics discussed in the Russian media space — the death of opposition leader Alexei Navalny, the terrorist attack at “Crocus City Hall”, the fall of Assad's regime in Syria, and others.

Key Findings



The main topics that attracted the most attention and triggered the most reactions and comments from Russian users in 2024 fall into three main blocks.

First block — economic and financial problems.

The actualization of these issues for Russian society throughout 2024, and especially in its second half, is evident by the significant interest of users in relevant messages, as well as the active attempts by the Russian authorities to shift public attention away from them or, at least, moderate these topics.

One of the most significant indicators of the actualization of economic and financial problems for Russians is the total number of Russian Telegram-message views about the Central Bank of Russia's policy regarding rising inflation. In 2024, this amounted to over 600 million, with the number of reactions to these messages exceeding 7.5 million.

Inflation acceleration led to a noticeable increase in the prices of all types of goods and services, including housing and utility services. Throughout 2024, messages about the rise in utility prices in Russian Telegram received 371 million views and 4.6 million reactions.

In the first two weeks of January 2025, the topic of rising tariffs continued its trend, gathering 56.6 million views and almost one million reactions. More than 560 compromised sources and 1,200 bots were involved in moderating the public discussion during this period.

Key Findings



Another indicator is strong interest among Russian social media users in ruble devaluation, closely linked to inflation and rising prices. Sensitivity to this issue is heightened by collective trauma from sharp ruble crashes since 1991, significantly worsening living conditions for general population. Total views of relevant Telegram messages in Russia in 2024 reached 321 million, with 3.35 million reactions.

Russians' growing focus on economic and financial issues, particularly inflation, at the everyday level is evident in their actions on social media: in May 2024, the number of posts and comments was approximately the same, but starting in October 2024, the ratio in favor of comments was already 5 to 1.

In the first two weeks of January 2025, the ratio of comments to posts remained high —5-to-1, and in some cases, 10-to-1. Half of the comments had a negative context.

In 2024, Russian propaganda could no longer pretend that these issues did not exist. Thus, it shifted from ignoring the worsening economic situation to actively attempting to divert public attention to other troubles and trying to moderate discussions on social media about the accumulated problems.

For example, Russian propaganda involved at least 1,200 compromised sources and 3,800 bots in 2024 to adjust the information flow and relevant discussions regarding tariffs increase.

Key Findings



Second block — the Russian-Ukrainian war.

The Kursk operation was one of the top events in 2024, given Russian interest in it. In just five months of 2024 (starting from the operation launch on August 6), there were 88,000 posts made in Russian segment of Telegram, which garnered 1.44 billion views and over 29 million reactions. This is a key indicator, considering the initial attempt by Russian propaganda to suppress the fact of the operational failure of Russian forces in the Kursk region. Due to the scale of the event, this was not possible.

In the following months, Russian propaganda used various approaches to explain the inability of the Russian side to drive the Armed Forces of Ukraine off its territory. This included the involvement of over 1,200 compromised channels and 3,800 bots for its information campaigns.

One of the main tactics used by the Kremlin to reduce the negative effects of the Kursk operation was actively promoting the narrative of significant Russian army successes in Donbas, including through military channels. However, in 2024, the Russian army still failed to capture Pokrovsk. Relevant messages in z-channels regarding the fighting near Pokrovsk received 744 million views and nearly 12 million reactions.

Key Findings



The war did not gain congruent ideological justification for the majority of population. Therefore, the topic of ending the “SMO” was actively discussed by Russians on Telegram throughout 2024. Relevant messages received over 480 million views and 8.5 million reactions.

Throughout the year, the Kremlin actively tried to moderate discussions about ending the war, involving nearly 1,200 compromised channels and 1,900 bots.

Vladimir Putin and Kremlin representatives constantly use the issue of escalating the war against Ukraine and direct hints at expanding the aggressive war to other countries in response to events that had occurred or could have occurred. Specifically, such events included systematic attacks by Ukrainian drones on Russian oil refineries and the authorization to use Western precision weapons against military targets on Russian territory.

Kremlin statements about escalating the war attracted significant interest from Russians in 2024. Relevant messages received 340 million views and 5 million reactions. The Kremlin involved over a thousand compromised sources and 1,300 bots to exert informational influence in this area.

Key Findings



Third block — internal political stability and geopolitical influence of the Kremlin.

From a quantitative perspective, the topic of Vladimir Putin's re-election garnered the highest number of views and publications due to clear reason — all the power of Russian propaganda focused on covering this event, followed by preparations for the inauguration and the ceremony itself.

At the same time, after the Kursk operation launch, a trend emerged where more than half of the comments on Telegram messages mentioning Vladimir Putin were negative. On average, this accounted for 200,000 messages per month, with the majority receiving negative reactions from users.

The death of Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny in prison on February 16, 2024, became one of the most resonant events of the past year. On that day, relevant Telegram messages in Russia received 385 million views. The total number of views during February-March 2024 reached 875 million, with nearly 15 million reactions. 58% of user reactions were negative.

Furthermore, the fall of Assad's regime in Syria came as a surprise and sparked active discussions in the Russian media space. On December 10, 2024, Telegram messages in Russia about active offensive actions by Syrian opposition forces gathered over 140 million views. The total number of views for the short December 2024 reached 935 million, with 16 million reactions, mostly negative.

The importance of these events for the Kremlin is evident from the significant propaganda resources deployed, including over 1,200 compromised sources and 8,000 bots.

Key Findings



In 2024, another country whose parliamentary elections attracted Russian attention in the context of Russian geopolitical influence and the possibility of losing it, was Georgia. Messages in the Russian segment of Telegram about Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration gathered 675 million views throughout 2024. An aggressive information campaign against Tbilisi's Euro-Atlantic course involved over 1,200 compromised channels and more than 2,600 bots.

One of the most resonant events in 2024 was the terrorist attack at "Crocus City Hall," which occurred on the evening of March 22. On March 23, Telegram messages about the attack in Russia gathered over 1.75 billion views. The total number of views for 2024 amounted to 7.69 billion, with 104 million reactions, mostly negative.

The scale of the information campaign and its importance to the Kremlin is underlined by the number of channels used to spread the relevant narratives and bots that steered the discussion in a certain direction: more than 1,800 compromised communication channels and almost 10,000 bots.

After the brutal terrorist attack at "Crocus City Hall," Russian propaganda intensified the promotion of a xenophobic agenda in the context of migration issues. The main collocations associated with labor migration were banditry, violence, extremism, and terrorism. In this campaign, nearly a thousand compromised sources spread the relevant messages in the Russian segment of Telegram in 2024.

In 2024, Russian Telegram saw 30,000 relevant messages, with nearly 20,000 having a negative tone. These messages generated a total of 254 million views.

Key Findings



Analysis of social media in the first two weeks of 2025 shows that nearly all of the most popular discussion topics in 2024 remain relevant for Russian users this year:

- The issue of rising tariffs continued to trend during the first two weeks of January, drawing 56.6 million views and nearly 1 million reactions.
- In the same period, messages about the Kursk operation garnered 107 million views and 2.9 million reactions.
- In January 2025, posts on z-channels regarding the Pokrovsk battle attracted 70 million views and nearly 1.3 million reactions, with a third of the messages carrying a negative tone.
- At the same time, discussions about ending the "special military operation (SMO)" gathered over 22 million views and 430,000 reactions within the first two weeks of January 2025.
- During this period, users published nearly 100,000 comments mentioning Putin, with 60% of them being negative. Propaganda efforts involved deploying 7,000 bots.
- In the first two weeks of 2025, publications about Syria accumulated 205 million views and over 3.4 million reactions, involving around 700 compromised sources and 3,000 bots. Approximately half of the messages carrying a negative context.
- In the first two weeks of 2025, relevant posts about the terrorist attack at "Crocus City Hall" received 28.6 million views and about 600 thousand reactions. Most of them were negative.
- During the first half of January 2025, posts about migrants received 13.4 million views and 420 thousand reactions. Most of the posts (60%) had a negative context.

Table of Contents

❑ **Socio-Economic Sentiments**

❑ **The War**

❑ **Socio-Political Sentiments**





Socio-Economic Sentiments

Acceleration of Inflation in 2024

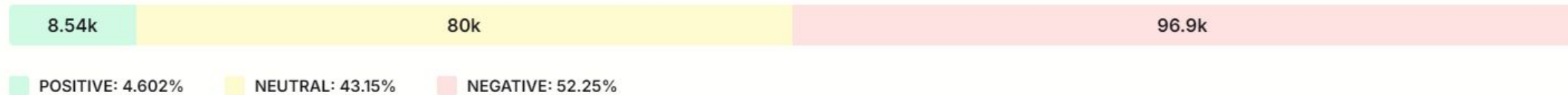
According to nationwide sociological surveys, by early 2024, rising inflation and prices ranked among the top concerns for Russians.

This tendency reflected in the number of views of relevant social media posts, as the issue directly affected ordinary Russians, prompting their interest in inflation control.

One of the clearest indicators is the total number of views of Russian Telegram message about the Central Bank's inflation policies. In 2024, these messages received over 600 million views and more than 7.5 million reactions.

Most reactions (52%) to these messages were negative, while only about 5% were positive.

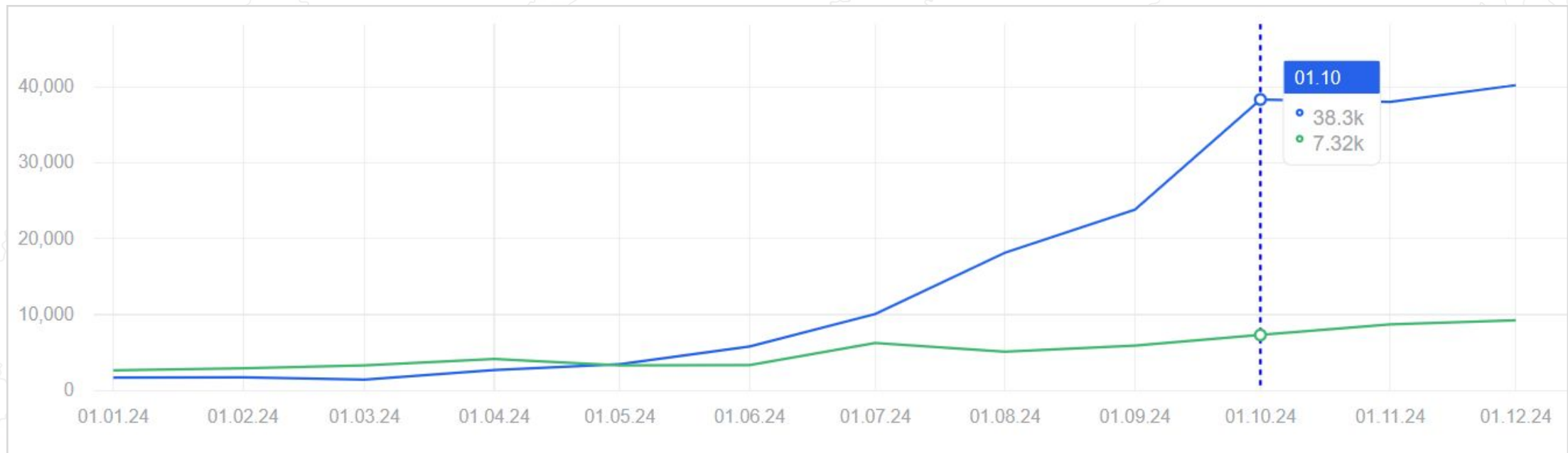
Reactions of readers to messages about rising inflation in 2024.



Acceleration of Inflation in 2024

The growing importance of inflation is evident in Russians' social media activity: in May 2024, the number of posts and comments was roughly equal, but by October 2024, the ratio shifted to 5-to-1 in favor of comments. This sharp increase clearly highlights the urgency of the issue and the desire of Russians to express their opinions in everyday discussions, even with strangers.

Chart 1. The ratio of comments (blue) to publications (green) about rising inflation.



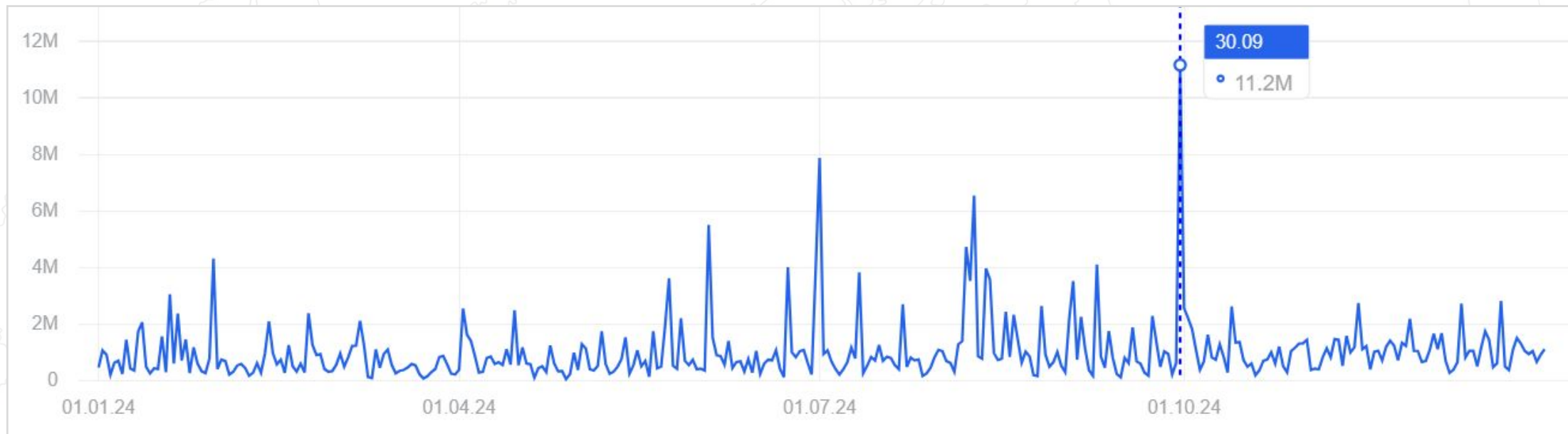
During the first two weeks of January 2025, the ratio of comments to posts remained high — 5-to-1, and in some cases, 10-to-1. Half of the comments carried a negative tone.

Overall Price Increase in 2024

The acceleration of inflation led to a noticeable increase in prices for all goods and services, including utility bills. Throughout the year, messages about rising utility prices on Russian Telegram received 371 million views and 4.6 million reactions.

Russian propaganda attempted to manage these discussions but could not completely suppress them. To steer the flow of information and discussions on relevant messages, 1,220 compromised sources and 3,800 bots were engaged.

Chart 2. Views of messages about the rise in utility costs in Russia in 2024.



In the first two weeks of January, the topic of rising tariffs continued its trend, gathering 56.6 million views and nearly 1 million reactions. Over 560 compromised sources and 1,200 bots were engaged to reduce societal tensions in relevant discussions.

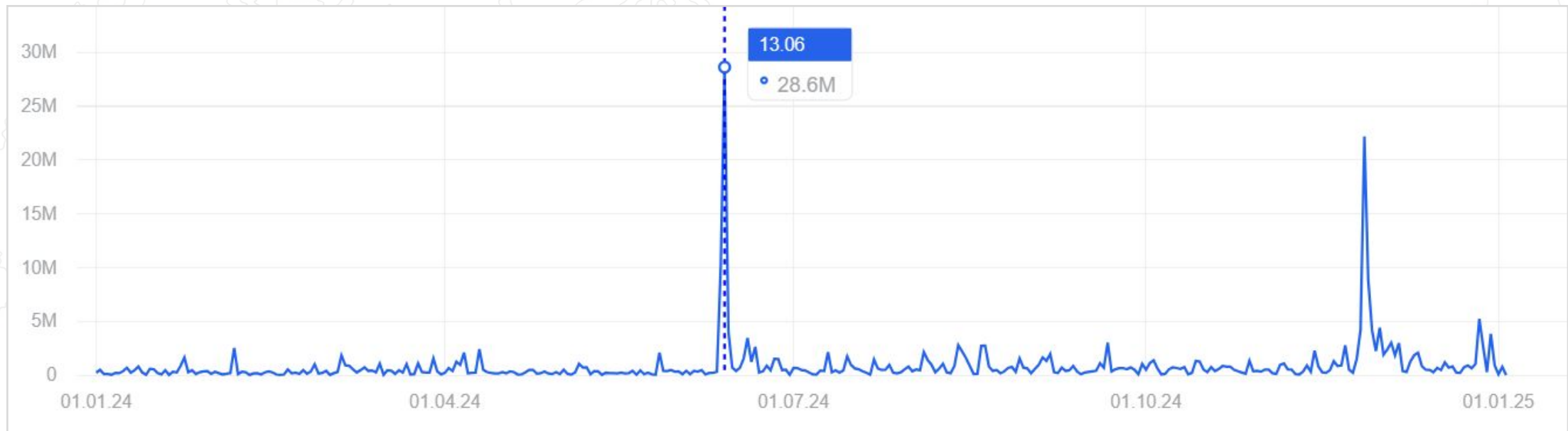
Devaluation of the Ruble

Ruble devaluation, closely tied to inflation and rising prices, became one of the most pressing socio-economic topics. This is due to the ruble's accelerating decline and the traumatic impact of this process on Russian society, given the sharp devaluations since 1991 that affected general population.

The total views of relevant Telegram messages in Russia reached 321 million, with 3.35 million reactions.

Given the relevance of this topic and its negative impact on trust in the authorities, the Kremlin actively moderated related discussions, engaging over 900 compromised sources and 2,400 bots in 2024.

Chart 3. Views of messages about the ruble exchange rate in Russia in 2024.





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The War

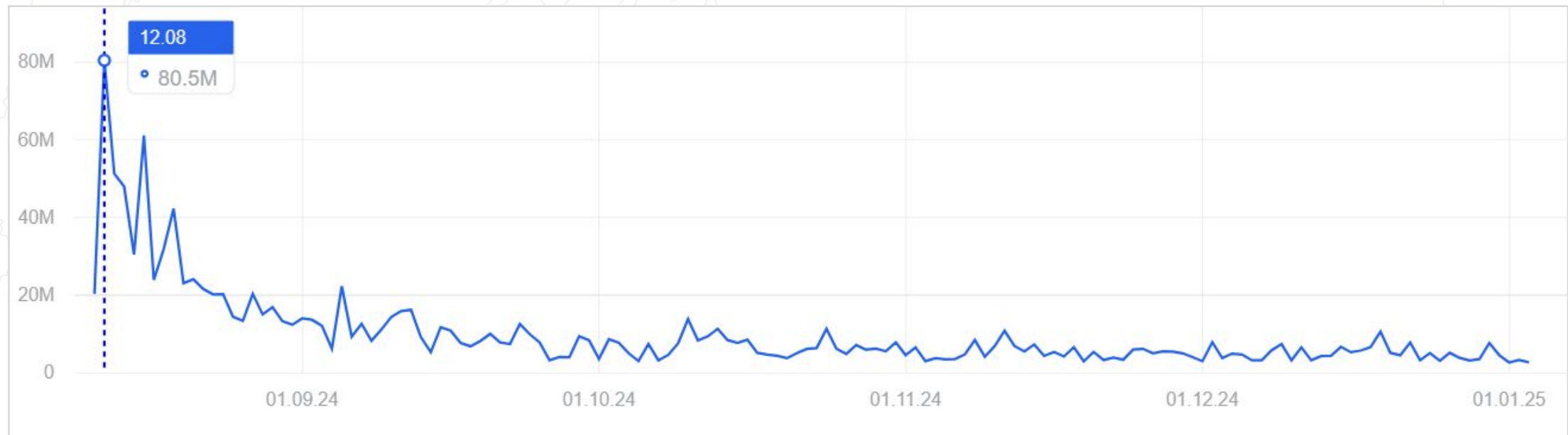
Kursk Operation

The Kursk operation became one of the top events of 2024 due to the significant interest it sparked among Russians.

In just five months of 2024 (starting from the operation launch on August 6), 88,000 messages were published in Russian segment of Telegram, accumulating 1.44 billion views and over 29 million reactions.

This is a critical indicator, considering the initial attempts by Russian propaganda to conceal the operational failure of Russian forces in the Kursk region. Due to the event's scale, this was not achievable. In the following months, Russian propaganda employed various approaches to explain the inability of their forces to push the Armed Forces of Ukraine off Russian territory. For these information campaigns, the Kremlin engaged over 1,200 compromised channels and 3,800 bots.

Chart 4. Views of messages about combat operations on the Kursk front since August 2024.



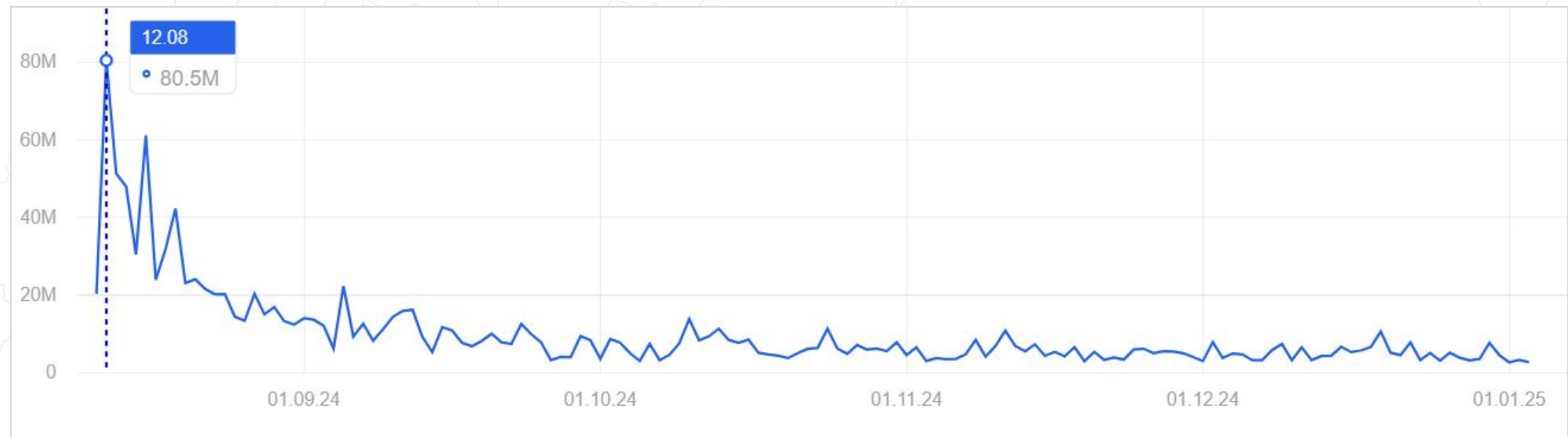
During January 1-15, 2025, messages regarding the Kursk operation garnered 107 million views and 2.9 million reactions. Covering these events involved over 400 compromised sources on the Russian side.

Pokrovsk: Continuous Assaults

One of the main Kremlin tactics to reduce the negative effects of the Kursk operation involved actively promoting the narrative of significant Russian army successes in Donbas, including through military channels. However, in 2024, Russian forces failed to capture Pokrovsk. Relevant posts in z-channels about fighting near Pokrovsk received 744 million views and nearly 12 million reactions.

The number of relevant post views was half that of posts about the Kursk operation. Moreover, negative reactions to posts about the assault on Pokrovsk clearly outnumber positive ones.

Chart 5. Views of z-messages about combat operations on the Pokrovsk front in 2024.



During the first two weeks of January 2025, views of posts on z-channels regarding the Pokrovsk direction reached 70 million, with nearly 1.3 million reactions. A third of the posts had a negative context.

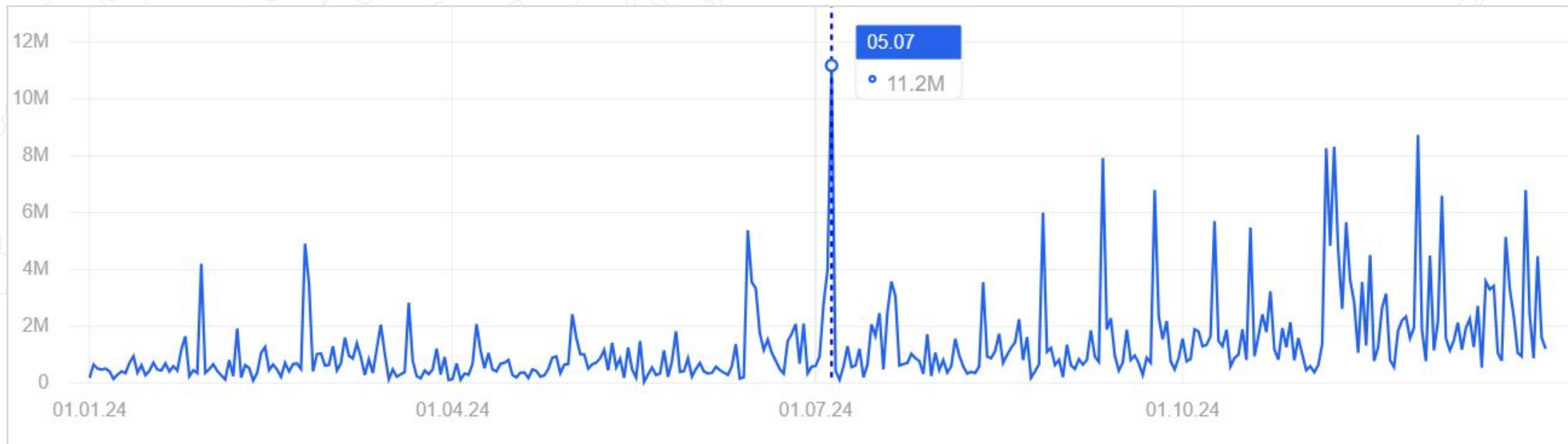
End of the "Special Military Operation"

On average, 70% of Russians would have a positive attitude toward Vladimir Putin's decision to end the so-called "Special Military Operation." This figure remained consistent in nationwide sociological surveys throughout 2023 and 2024.

The war lacked a coherent ideological justification for most of the population. As a result, Russians actively discussed the topic of ending the war on Telegram throughout 2024. Relevant messages received over 480 million views and 8.5 million reactions.

During this period, the Kremlin actively sought to moderate the topic of ending the war, involving nearly 1,200 compromised Telegram channels and 1,900 bots.

Chart 6. Views of messages about the end of the "Special Military Operation" in 2024.



Posts about ending of the "SMO" in the first two weeks of January 2025 gathered over 22 million views and 430,000 reactions. Over 270 compromised channels participated in this.

Escalation of the War

The issue of escalating the war against Ukraine and direct hints at expanding the aggressive war to other countries were constantly used by Vladimir Putin and Kremlin representatives in foreign policy, in response to events that had occurred or could occur. Such events included systematic Ukrainian drone attacks on Russian oil refineries and the permission to use Western precision weapons against military targets on Russian territory.

Kremlin statements about escalating the war attracted significant interest from Russians in 2024. Relevant posts received 340 million views and 5 million reactions. The Kremlin engaged over a thousand compromised sources and 1,300 bots to influence discussions on this topic.

Chart 7. Views of messages about the escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2024.



Relevant messages in the first two weeks of January 2025 garnered 3.4 million views and 44,000 reactions, indicating a slight decrease in escalation rhetoric from the Russian side ahead of potential negotiations between Moscow and Washington.



Socio-Political Sentiments

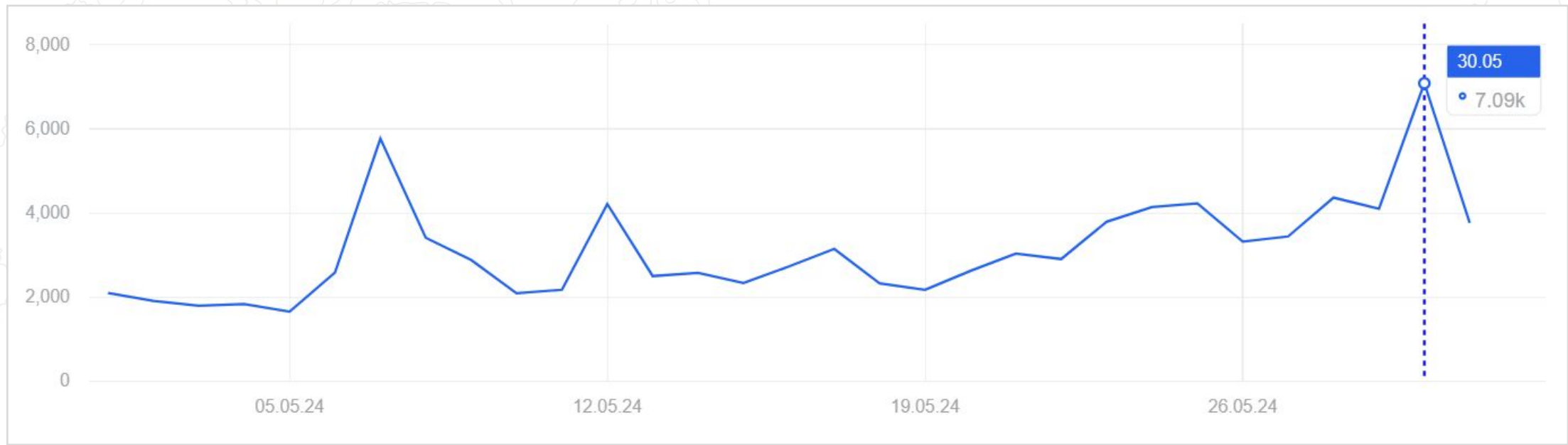
Re-election of Vladimir Putin

From a quantitative perspective, the topic of Vladimir Putin's re-election garnered the highest number of views and publications. This is because the full power of Russian propaganda focused on covering this event, followed by preparations for the inauguration and the ceremony itself.

From a substantive standpoint, in 2024 (especially during the presidential campaign and after the Kursk operation launch), more than half of the comments on messages in Russian Telegram mentioning Vladimir Putin were negative.

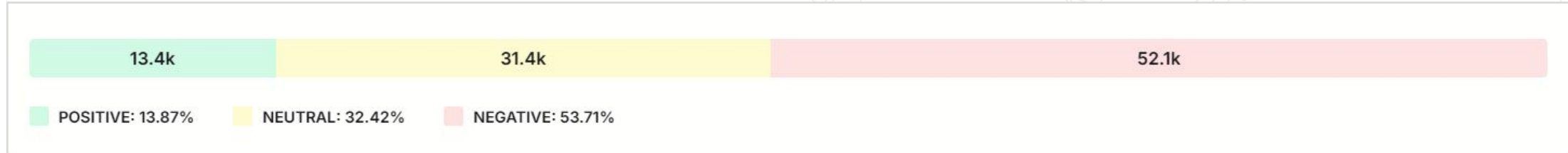
For example, nearly 54% of the comments regarding messages about Vladimir Putin's re-election in May 2024 had a negative tone.

Chart 8. Reader comments on messages about Vladimir Putin's re-election, May 2024.



Re-election of Vladimir Putin

Reader reactions to messages about Vladimir Putin's re-election, May 2024.

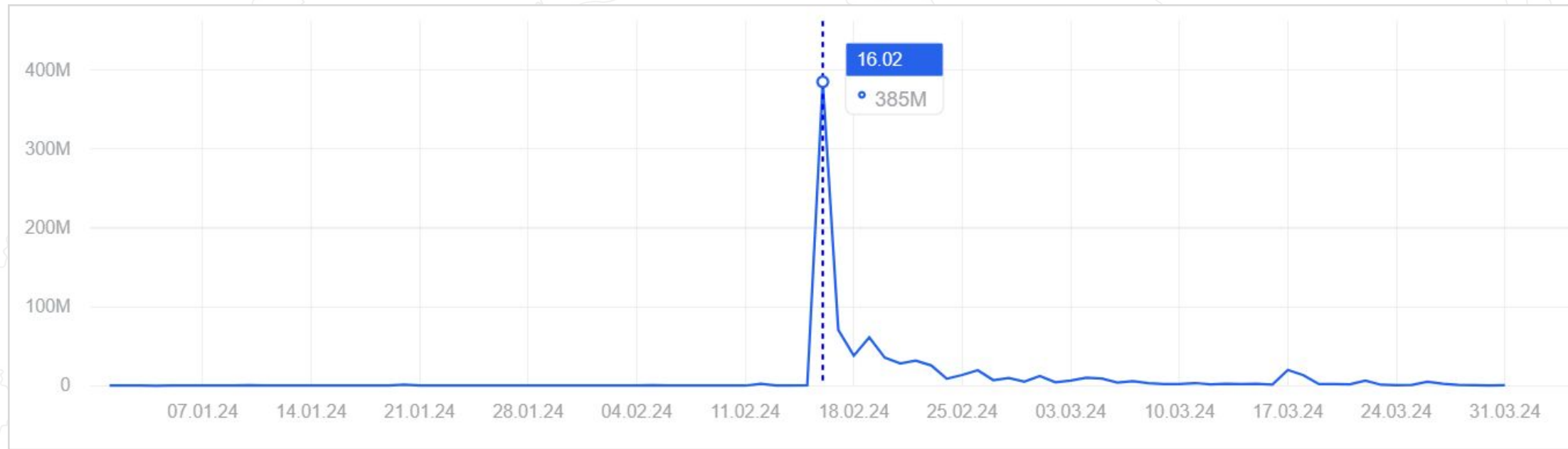


In the first two weeks of 2025, users published nearly 100,000 comments mentioning Putin, with 60% having a negative context. Around 7,000 bots moderated these comments. Such figures are nearly identical to the average for 2024, indicating a consistent trend where, on average, 60% of posts featuring the Russian president have a negative tone.

Death of Alexei Navalny

The death of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny in prison on February 16, 2024, became one of the most resonant events of the past year. On that day, relevant Telegram messages in Russia garnered 385 million views. The total number of views during February-March 2024 reached 875 million, with nearly 15 million reactions, 58% of which were negative.

Chart 9. Views of messages about the death of Alexei Navalny, February-March 2024.



Demise of Alexei Navalny



Reader reactions to messages about the death of Alexei Navalny, February-March 2024.

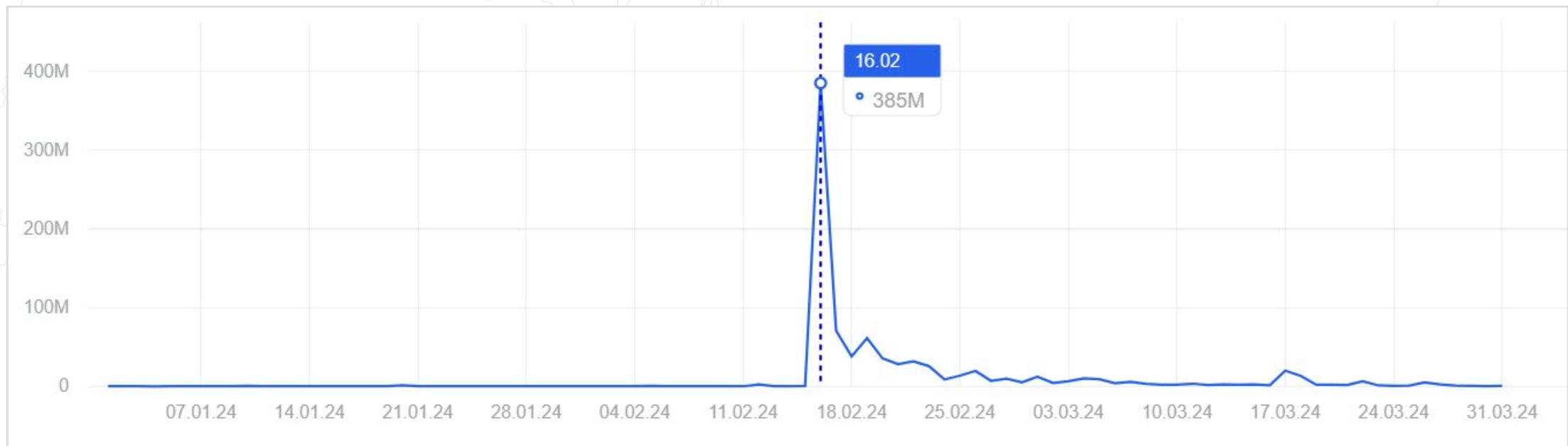


In the first two weeks of January 2025, posts about the death of Alexei Navalny garnered nearly 3.9 million views and over 56,000 reactions, mostly negative. Thus, despite a decrease in interest in this event and its consequences for domestic political stability in Russia, this trend continued into 2025.

Setback in Syria

The overthrow of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria came as a surprise and sparked active discussions in the Russian media space. On December 10, 2024, relevant Telegram messages about the opposition forces' active offensives in Syria garnered over 140 million views. The total number of views for December 2024 (as of mid-month) reached 935 million, with 16 million reactions, mostly negative. From the first days of publications about the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime, the Kremlin behaved passively, failing to provide clear narratives for the propaganda system. However, after a week, similar to the events in the Kursk region, a strategy of response and corresponding narratives began to emerge in coordinated messages and explanations. To achieve this, the Kremlin mobilized significant propaganda resources, including over 1,200 compromised channels and 8,000 bots.

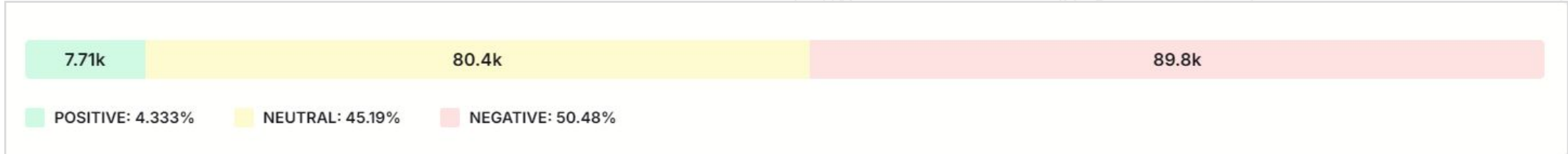
Chart 10. Views of messages about combat operations and the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria.



Setback in Syria



Reader reactions to events in Syria.



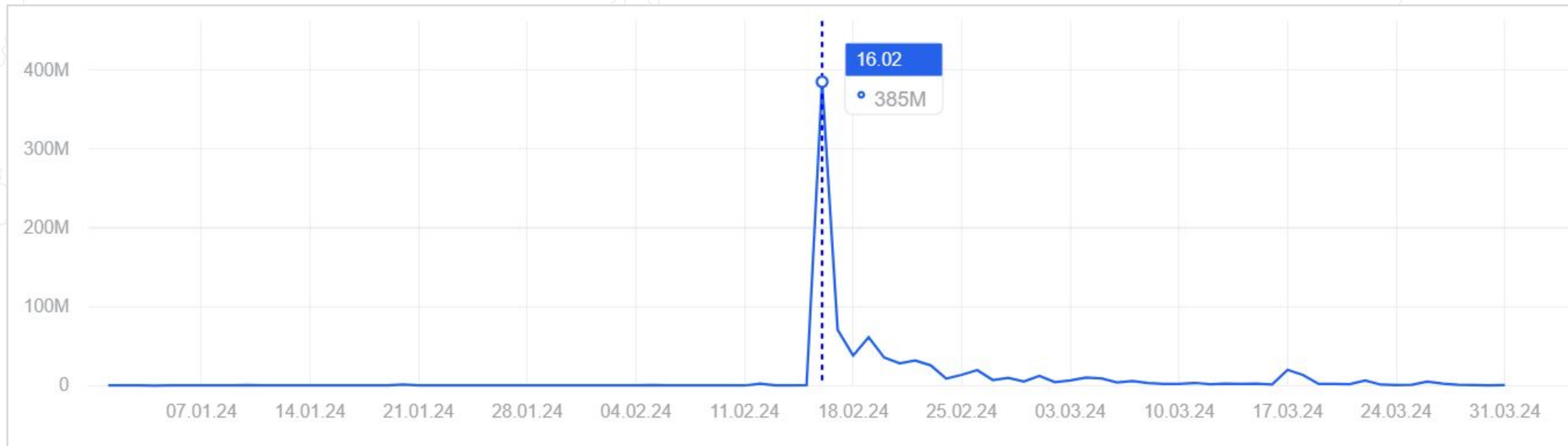
Since the beginning of 2025, in the first two weeks, posts on Syria had 205 million views and over 3.4 million reactions. Nearly 700 compromised sources and 3,000 bots participated. About half of the posts had a negative context.

Events in Georgia

In 2024, the parliamentary elections in Georgia became another focal point for Russians in the context of their geopolitical influence and the potential loss of that influence. The Azerbaijan-Armenia war over Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia's overt pro-Western shift after its defeat seriously undermined Russia's position in the Caucasus. Moreover, these events demonstrated the Kremlin's limited ability to project military power due to its war of attrition against Ukraine. In response, Russia bet on so-called “soft power” to influence events in Georgia.

Throughout the year, Kremlin-backed propaganda actively discredited the country's Euro-Atlantic course and ran a covert campaign in support of the ruling party, which maintained a Euroskeptic stance. Telegram messages in the Russian segment regarding Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration gathered 675 million views throughout 2024. The aggressive information campaign against Tbilisi's Euro-Atlantic course was carried out with the involvement of over 1,200 compromised channels and more than 2,600 bots.

Chart 11. Views of messages regarding Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration in 2024.



Events in Georgia



Reader reactions to messages regarding Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration in 2024.



In the first two weeks of 2025, relevant posts about Georgia's European integration reached nearly 10 million views and 176,000 reactions, indicating a relative decrease in interest in these events due to the reduced intensity of domestic political struggles.

Migration Crisis

Economic and financial problems became apparent to broad segments of the Russian population in 2024. These trends accelerated especially in the second half of the year, after Vladimir Putin's inauguration. In such conditions, optimistic statements from the government and the president had a counterproductive effect. This was evident to the Presidential Administration, as was the realization that the so-called "special military operation" could no longer justify the deteriorating standard of living for Russians.

In such conditions, the Kremlin adopted an old strategy that had proven effective not only in Russia: the search for internal enemies and shifting attention to fighting them. These enemies could not be representatives of the so-called liberal-democratic opposition. Moreover, their leader died in a penal colony at the beginning of 2024, and other recognizable leaders had been exchanged and left Russia.

Members of the LGBTQI+ community also could not serve this role, as it had been de jure recognized as extremist. A wave of raids against nightclubs, labeled as hubs for this community, lacked the potential to shift public focus from more urgent problems.

Thus, the chosen enemy became the large yet most vulnerable category of the Russian population — migrant workers. Against this backdrop, the terrorist attack at "Crocus City Hall" on March 22, 2024, laid the psychological, emotional, and moral foundation for a systematic anti-migrant campaign in Russia.

On March 23, Telegram posts about the attack in Russia gathered over 1.75 billion views. The total number of views for 2024 reached 7.69 billion, with 104 million reactions, mostly negative.

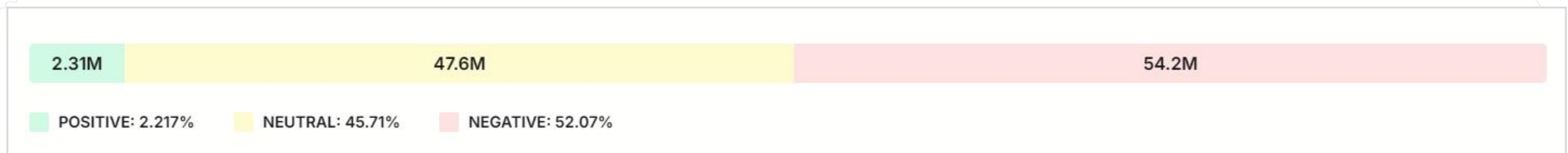
The scale of the information campaign and its importance for the Kremlin is underscored by the number of channels used to spread the relevant narratives and bots that directed discussions in a particular direction: over 1,800 compromised communication channels and nearly 10,000 bots.

Migration Crisis

Chart 12. Views of messages about the terrorist attack at “Crocus City Hall” in Russia in 2024.



Reader reactions to messages about the terrorist attack at “Crocus City Hall” in 2024.



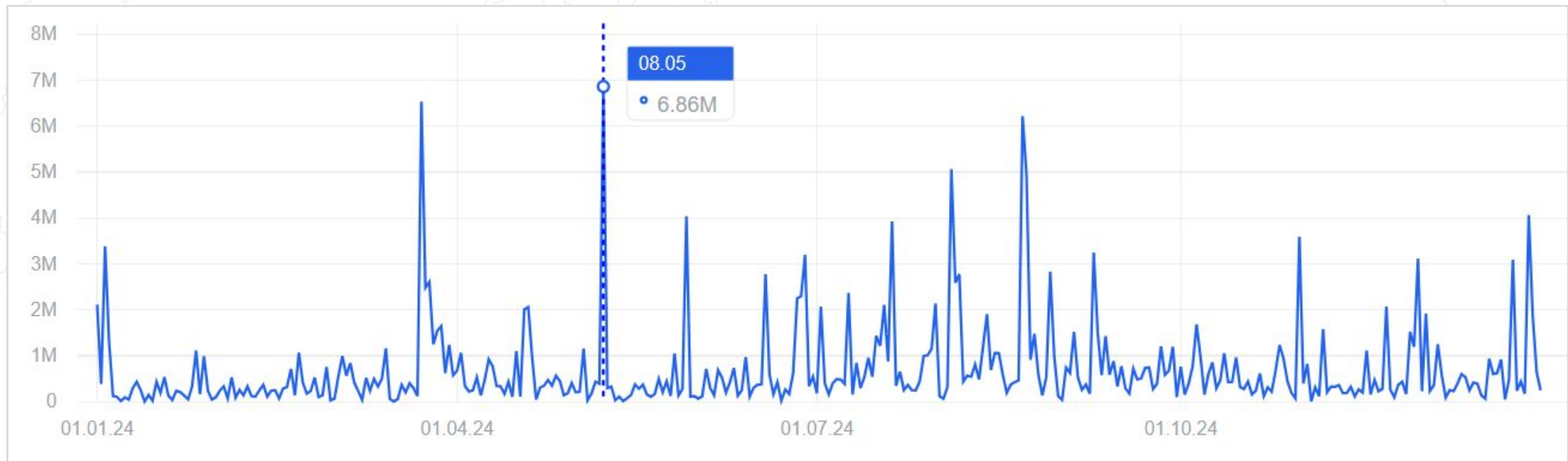
Migration Crisis

The issue of migration remains relevant at the beginning of 2025. In the first two weeks of the new year, relevant posts garnered 28.6 million views and nearly 600,000 reactions, most of which were negative.

After the brutal terrorist attack at “Crocus City Hall,” Russian propaganda intensified its promotion of a xenophobic agenda in the context of migration issues. The main collocations associated with labor migration included banditry, violence, extremism, and terrorism. In this campaign, nearly 1,000 compromised sources spread relevant messages in the Russian segment of Telegram.

There were over 30,000 relevant posts made in Russian segment of Telegram in 2024, with almost 20,000 having a negative tone. The total number of the relevant post views reached 254 million.

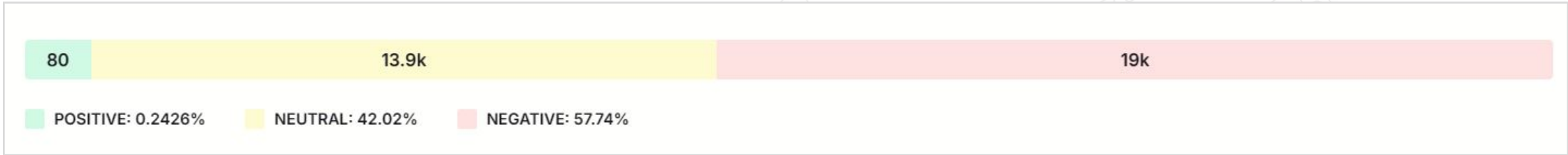
Chart 13. Views of messages about migrants in the context of violence and terrorism in 2024.



Migration Crisis



Reader reactions to messages about migrants in the context of violence and terrorism in 2024.





Thank you!