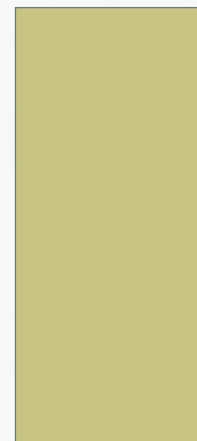




TRIAL BY FIRE

A NATURAL DISASTER'S IMPACT ON ATTITUDES
TOWARD THE GOVERNMENT IN RURAL RUSSIA



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MOTIVATION

- When and why do people support the government?
- When and why do they lend support to a non-democratic regime?

THE CASE OF RUSSIA

What determines support for Vladimir Putin and his political system?

- Perceptions of economic performance (Treisman, 2011; Ross and Mischler, 2011)
- Control over media and political sphere
- High formal barriers – elimination of challengers

Do only money, repressions and manipulations matter?

MOTIVATION 2

How do exogenous shocks affect political attitudes?

- Rally 'round the flag effect" (Mueller, 1970)
- Vietnam war military draft lottery (Erikson, Stoker, 2011)

RESEARCH QUESTION

How does national disaster affect attitudes toward the government?

NATURAL DISASTERS AND POLITICS

- *Abney and Hill (1966)*: people punish the government for the absence of pre-disaster preparation
- *Achen and Bartels (2004)*: citizens blame the incumbent government for different natural disasters
- *Arceneaux and Stein (2006)* and *Gasper and Reeves (2011)*: voters punish politicians for severe weather damage only if responsible officials performed badly
- *Healy and Malhotra (2009)* voters disregard politicians' preventative actions, but reward them for delivering relief funds.

RUSSIAN FIRES 2010: BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Were the most disastrous in the recorded history:

- 500 thousands of burned hectares of land
- More than 1200 houses destroyed
- The state of emergency in 7 regions

Challenge to the “vertical of power”

CASE OF RUSSIA

Schultz and Libman (2011): exogenous shock to test the idea of local knowledge advantage for governmental performance.

Szakonyi (2011): the effect of fires on voting results for the ruling United Russia Party in the regional elections

THE IDEA OF OUR STUDY

- Natural experiment
- Individual-level data

HYPOTHESES

- *Hypothesis 1: People from burned villages are less likely to support the government than those from unburned villages.*

Blame attribution theory

- *Hypothesis 2: People, who blame government for the fires, tend to support the authorities less.*
- *Hypothesis 3: People, who are dissatisfied with the relief measures, tend to support the authorities less*
- *Hypothesis 4: People, whose households were directly victimized by the natural disaster, tend to support the authorities less.*

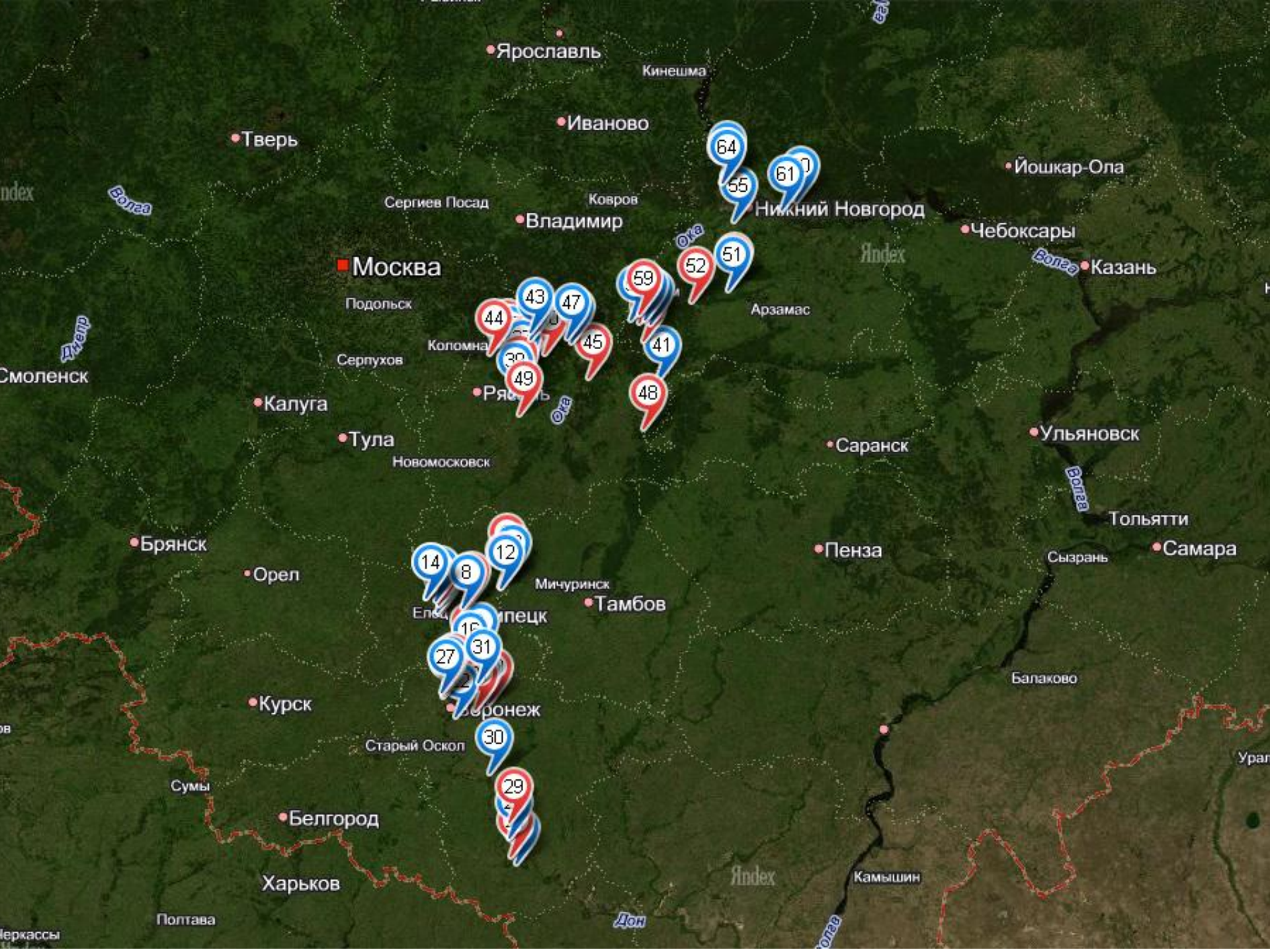
HYPOTHESES 2

- *Hypothesis 5. People from the burned villages tend to support the authorities more, because of the generous aid provision.*
- *Hypothesis 6. Increase in support for authorities in the burned villages could be caused not only by the aid provision, but by the emotional, behavioral and cognitive responses*

System justification theory

SAMPLING

- **Regions:** Nizhny Novgorod, Ryazan, Lipetsk and Voronezh oblasts
- **Procedure of blocked randomization** (region, population size, and distances from the oblast capital and rayon center)
- **Treatment group:** 34 villages from 43 villages from the 4 most suffered regions
- **Control group:** 36 from 160
- $\frac{1}{2}$ control group was chosen from the terrain which is prone to wildfires and $\frac{1}{2}$ from the territories with the small risk of wildfire



SURVEY

- Conducted by the authors in July and August of 2011 (394 and 375 respondents)
- **8 blocks of questions:** trust, participation in local governance, events related to the fires and damage from it, political awareness (knowledge of the names of politicians), satisfaction with different levels of government, mass media and personal information
- **35** questions in sum
- From 10 to 16 people per village

SOCIAL CONTEXT

“I have been drinking since 1994”...

VARIABLES AND DATA

Treatment: exposure to fire

Outcomes :

- support for UR - «Next December you will vote for... (party` label)»
- support for head village, governor, the Prime Minister (Putin) and the President (Medvedev)
 - answers for the questions:

“Are you satisfied with the work of...?”

Likert scale: 1 - fully dissatisfied, 2 - rather dissatisfied than satisfied, 3 - rather satisfied than dissatisfied and 4 - fully satisfied

CONTROLS

- **Village level:** population size, ratio of respondents to the total population, size of territory, distance from the oblast center, distance from the rayon center, municipal revenues and expenditures from the 2009
- **Individual level:** residence status (permanent/temporary season residence), sex, age, the level of education, and occupational status, access to communications (radio, TV, internet)
- **Regional fixed effects**

VILLAGE-LEVEL COVARIATES

Table 1. Means and F-test for basic village-level variables

Fire	Population	Territory	Distance from the oblast capital	Distance from the rayon center	Revenues	Expenditures
Yes	673,2	14662	56,7	18,6	6144486,7	5915200,5
N=36						
No	586,8	16514	62,3	17,9	6211278,9	5883892
N=34						
F-test	0,183	0,104	0,104	0,276	0,861	0,922
(Sig)						

INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL COVARIATES

Table 2. Means and F-test for basic individual-level variables

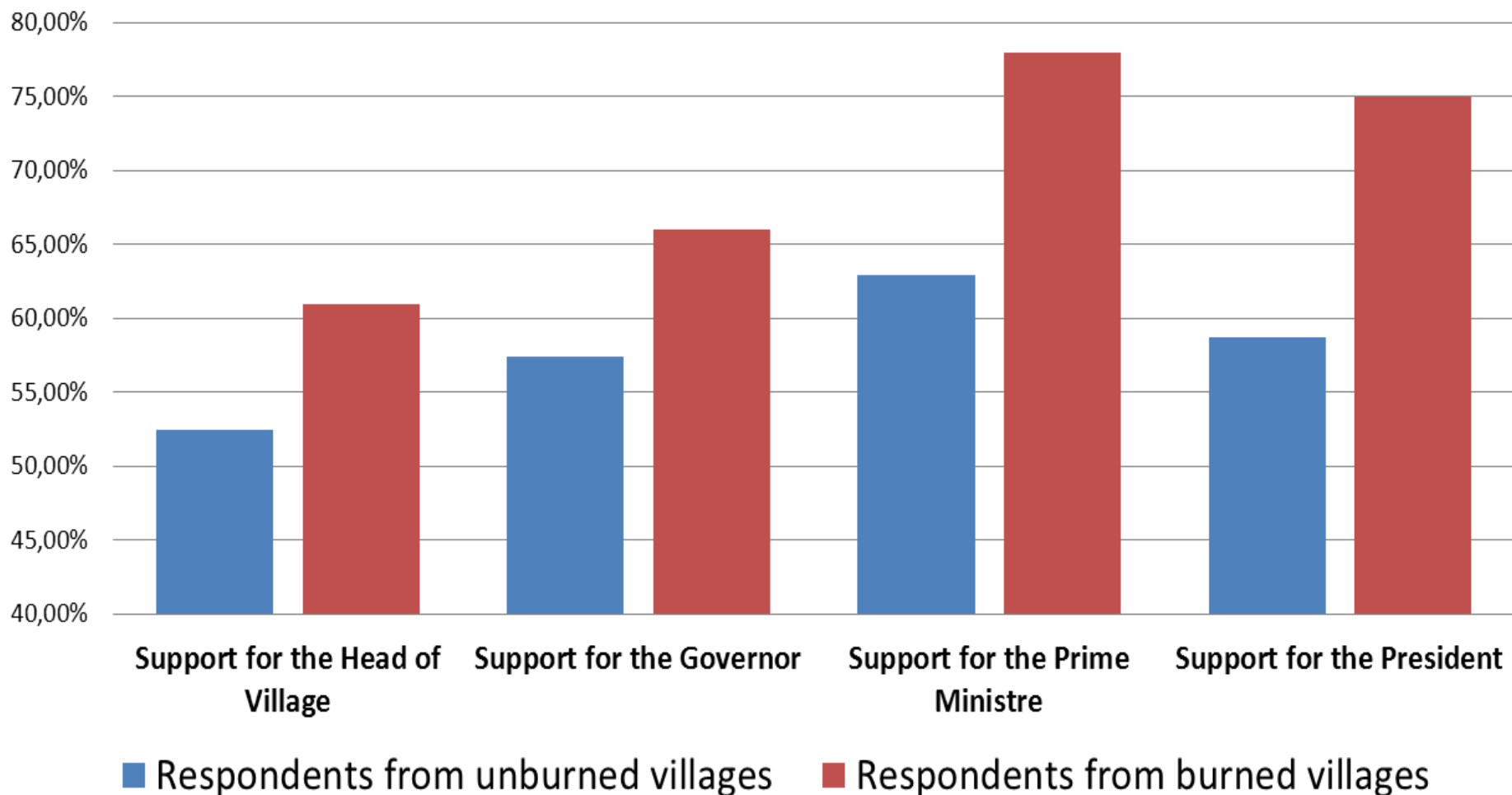
Fire	Residence	Sex	Age	Education	Occupation	Radio	TV	Cell Phone	Inter net
No	2,2	0,39	53,1	5,1	1,42	0,6	1,1	1,5	1,1
N=394									
Yes	2,8	0,4	55	4,3	1,4	2,2	2,2	2,4	2,1
N=375									
F-test	0,295	0,85	0,1	0,349	0,982	0,05	0,09	0,12	0,21
(Sig)									

THE EFFECT OF THE EXPOSURE TO FIRE ON SUPPORT FOR AUTHORITIES

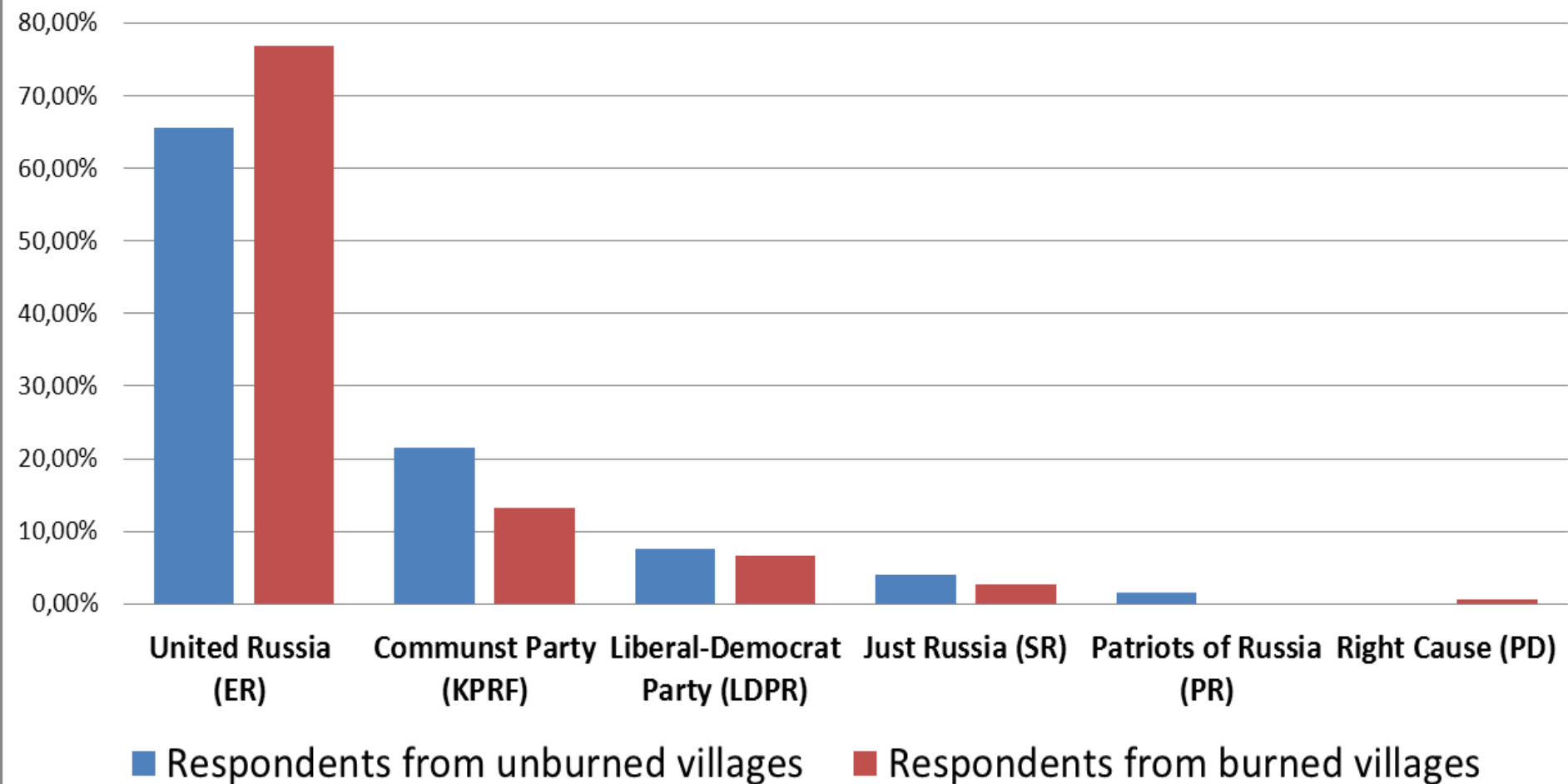
Independent Variables	United Russia		Village Head		Governor		Prime Minister		President	
	Coef (St. Errors)	z	Coef (St. Errors)	z	Coef (St. Errors)	z	Coef (St. Errors)	z	Coef (St. Errors)	z
Fire	0.47** (0.2)	2.33	0.35* (0.2)	1.75	0.52** (0.19)	2.65	0.69*** (0.18)	3.71	0.64*** (0.17)	3.7
<i>N</i>	767		635		574		699		692	

Note: *p<.10, ** p<.05, ***p<.01; Standard Errors Adjusted for 70 clusters in village

Political Support for Russian Authorities



Party Preferences



TREATMENT EFFECTS VS. CONTROLS

Independent Variables	United Russia		Village Head		Governor		Prime Minister		President	
	Coef (St. Errors)	z	Coef (St. Errors)	z	Coef (St. Errors)	z	Coef (St. Errors)	z	Coef (St. Errors)	z
Fire	0.54** (0.22)	2.42	0.34* (0.2)	1.69	0.53** (0.21)	2.57	0.72*** (0.18)	3.81	0.59*** (0.17)	3.30
Distance to municipal center	0.002 (0.01)	0.14	-0.01 (0.1)	-0.08	0.02** (0.01)	1.96	0.06 (0.11)	0.55	0.01 (0.01)	0.15
Residence Status	-0.13 (0.09)	-1.4	-0.03 (0.07)	-0.44	-0.03 (0.07)	-0.47	-0.26*** (0.08)	-3.23	-0.21** (0.07)	-2.75
Gender (Male)	-0.56** (0.22)	-2.52	-0.25 (0.15)	-1.67	-0.27 (0.2)	-1.39	-0.42** (0.14)	-3.00	-0.38** (0.16)	-2.39
Education	-0.26** (0.13)	-1.95	-0.06 (0.09)	-0.57	-0.11 (0.1)	-1.07	-0.34*** (0.08)	-4.1	-0.33*** (0.08)	-3.73
Occupation	0.49* (0.27)	1.81	-0.1 (0.18)	-0.57	-0.3 (0.19)	-1.54	-0.05 (0.19)	-0.28	-0.04 (0.18)	-0.24
Radio	-0.27 (0.22)	-1.2	0.07 (0.14)	0.54	-0.15 (0.15)	0.96	-0.16 (0.16)	-1.03	-0.4** (0.14)	-2.9
Internet	0.01 (0.03)	0.48	-0.01** (0.004)	-2.69	-0.02*** (0.005)	-5.32	.02** (0.01)	2.07	0.02* (0.01)	1.84
Region Effects	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
N	711		583		583		651		529	23

Note: *p<.10, ** p<.05, ***p<.01; Standard Errors Adjusted for 70 clusters in village

THE EFFECTS OF THE TREATMENT OUTCOMES AND SPILLOVERS ON SUPPORT FOR AUTHORITIES

Independent Variables	United Russia		Village Head		Governor		Prime Minister		President	
	Coef (St. Errors)	z	Coef (St. Errors)	z	Coef (St. Errors)	z	Coef (St. Errors)	z	Coef (St. Errors)	z
Fire	0.57** (0.24)	1.92	0.30 (0.22)	1.51	0.50** (0.24)	2.11	0.71*** (0.21)	3.17	0.52*** (0.21)	2.72
<i>Distance to fire</i>	<i>-0.02**</i> <i>(0.009)</i>	<i>-2.11</i>	<i>-0.11</i> <i>(0.09)</i>	<i>-1.19</i>	<i>-0.09</i> <i>(0.08)</i>	<i>-1.2</i>	<i>-0.01**</i> <i>(0.008)</i>	<i>-2.08</i>	<i>-0.01**</i> <i>(0.007)</i>	<i>-1.92</i>
<i>Number of reconstructed houses</i>	<i>-0.67</i> <i>(0.41)</i>	<i>-1.63</i>	<i>0.75</i> <i>(0.69)</i>	<i>1.59</i>	<i>0.24</i> <i>(0.84)</i>	<i>0.29</i>	<i>1.2**</i> <i>(0.56)</i>	<i>2.29</i>	<i>1.4**</i> <i>(0.56)</i>	<i>2.63</i>
Personal-level	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
Village-level										
Region-level										
controls										
N	700		573		520		641		628	

Note: *p<.10, ** p<.05, ***p<.01; Standard Errors Adjusted for 70 clusters in village

WITHIN TREATMENT GROUP

Independent Variables	United Russia		Village Head		Governor		Prime Minister		President	
	Coef (St. Errors)	z	Coef (St. Errors)	z	Coef (St. Errors)	z	Coef (St. Errors)	z	Coef (St. Errors)	z
<i>Victimization</i>	0.28 (0.16)	1.77	-0.06 (0.2)	-0.3	-0.26 (0.24)	-1.09	0.46 (0.28)	1.64	0.37 (0.27)	1.35
<i>Blaming the authorities</i>	-0.57 (0.53)	-1.08	-0.95** (0.23)	-2.5	-0.13 (0.29)	-0.44	0.09 (0.23)	0.29	-0.15 (0.27)	-0.55
<i>Satisfaction with relief measures</i>	0.20 (0.17)	1.17	0.31** (0.12)	2.94	0.44*** (0.14)	2.86	0.68*** (0.14)	4.62	0.56*** (0.13)	4.25
Personal-level	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
Village-level										
Personal-level controls										
N	275		238		224		263		254	

Note: *p<.10, ** p<.05, ***p<.01; Standard Errors Adjusted for 70 clusters in village

RESULTS

- The exposure to natural disaster led to the increase in the levels of support for authorities and the party of power
- Governmental aid cannot fully explain this paradoxical finding

INTERPRETATIONS

System justification: Under conditions of uncertainty and dependence from government loyalty increases rather than fall

The effect of political regime – the system is perceived to be inevitable; absence of informative political environment

Demonstration effect– effectiveness of relief measures

CONCLUSIONS

- Who is to be blamed?
- What is to be done?
- Psychological foundations of support for non-democratic government