Is Putin's Popularity (Still) Real?
Online Appendix

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A: Difference between direct and list estimates

Tables A.1-A.3 report the estimated difference between direct and list estimates of support for Russian political figures, as calculated using the predict function from the R package **list** (Blair and Imai, 2012). Under the assumption of no design effects, this difference represents preference falsification. In each table, values in parentheses represent 95% confidence intervals for the estimated difference in direct vs. list estimates of approval, whereas bold denotes differences for which these intervals do not include zero.

Table A.1: Estimated difference between list and direct estimates of support for Putin

	Contemporary list	**Historical list**	**International B list**	**Statement A list**
2015				
January	-6% (-16%, 5%)	-7% (-17%, 3%)		
March	-8% (-19%, 2%)	-9% (-18%, 0%)		
2020-2021				
November	-9% (-19%, 1%)	**-14% (-23%, -5%)**		
February		**-23% (-32%, -14%)**		
March	**-24% (-34%, -13%)**	**-19% (-28% , -10%)**		
June	**-23% (-33%, -13%)**		**-21% (-31%, -12%)**	
2022				
June		**-21% (-30%, -12%)**		**-29% (-38%, -20%)**

Note: International A and B lists differ in that A includes Lukashenko in the control list whereas B includes Nazarbaev instead. Both Political item A and B lists use political items instead of political figures in their control lists, but otherwise have wholly different control list items.

Table A.2: Estimated difference between list and direct estimates of support for Navalny

	Contemporary list	**Society list**
February 2021	1% (-8%, 11%)	-5% (-12%, 3%)
March 2021		1% (-7%, 8%)

Table A.3: Estimated difference between list and direct estimates of support for placebo figures

	Brezhnev	**Grudinin**
March 2021		
June 2021	**-22% (-31%, -13%)**	**-12% (-20%, -4%)**

Table A.4: Estimated difference between list and direct estimates of support for Castro

	International A list	**International B list**	**Statement B list**
March 2015	-9% (-19%, 2%)		
March 2021		**-22% (-32%, -12%)**	
June 2022		**-14% (-23%, -6%)**	**-31% (-41%, -21%)**

Note: International A and B lists differ in that A includes Lukashenko in the control list whereas B includes Nazarbaev instead. Both Political item A and B lists use political items instead of political figures in their control lists, but otherwise have wholly different control list items.

B: List experiment diagnostics

B.1: Blair/Imai design effect tests

We perform the Blair and Imai (2012) design effect tests on all list experiments and report the Bonferroni-corrected p-values in Appendix Table B.1. We reject the null hypothesis of no design effects at the α=.05 level. The results indicate the possibility of design effects in three of the 22 experiments: the historical list in January 2015 and both list experiments (contemporary and historical) in November 2020. The fact that both experiments in November 2020 exhibit the possibility of design effects is perhaps reason for concern about this survey wave.

Table B.1: Blair-Imai design effect test Bonferroni-corrected p-values

	Contemporary	Historical	International	Society	Statement
2015					
January	.12	**.02**			
March	1.00	.17	.43 (Castro)		
2020-2021					
November	**.05**	**.00**			
February	1.00 (Navalny)	1.00		1.00 (Navalny)	
March	1.00	1.00	1.00 (Castro)	1.00 (Navalny)	
June	1.00	1.00 (Brezhnev)	1.00	1.00 (Grudinin)	
2022					
June		.53	.65 (Castro)		1.00
June					1.00 (Castro)

We reject the null hypothesis of no design effects for p-values below α=.05 (highlighted in bold). All lists have Putin as the sensitive item unless another figure is specified.

B.2: Balance tests

We assess experimental balance by regressing assignment to a given list treatment on three demographic covariates: self-identification as male, age (mean-centered and scaled to have a maximum absolute value of one), and higher education. We use linear probability models in all analyses for ease of interpretation. Note that a majority of list experiments with Putin as a sensitive item are double lists, which mean that the assignment is for treatment in one list and control in the other. One Castro experiment is also a double list, while all remaining lists are single.

This exercise yields 15 regressions, with 45 coefficient estimates. F-tests indicate possible imbalance in four of these regressions; six of the 45 coefficient estimates in five separate experiments indicate a statistically significant relationship with assignment to treatment. Given that 1) there is relatively weak evidence of imbalance in treatment assignment 2) no clear pattern in imbalance, these tests reveal little cause for concern regarding randomization.

Table B.2: Balance checks for Putin list experiments

	2015		2020		2021			2022
	January	March	November		February	March	June	June
	Historical + Contemporary		Contemporary	Historical	Historical	Historical + Contemporary	International + Contemporary	Historical + Statement
Constant	0.52***	0.47***	0.52***	0.53***	0.49***	0.49***	0.47***	0.53***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Male	−0.01	0.02	0.02	−0.04	−0.01	0.00	0.02	−0.02
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Age	0.05	−0.01	0.10***	−0.01	0.00	0.04	−0.00	−0.01
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Higher Education	−0.01	0.04	−0.05**	−0.03	0.01	0.01	0.01	−0.04
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Observations	1,600	1,599	1,607	1,607	1,601	1,623	1,623	1,628
R^2	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
F Statistic (df = 3)	1.06	1.10	4.20***	1.26	0.08	0.56	0.27	0.90
Note:								*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table B.3: Balance checks for non-Putin list experiments

	2015	2021					2022
	March	February	March		June		June
	International	Society + Contemporary	Society	International	Historical	Society	International + Statement
Constant	0.47***	0.49***	0.50***	0.50***	0.48***	0.50***	0.54***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Male	0.07***	0.02	−0.01	−0.01	0.00	−0.03	−0.06**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Age	0.01	−0.01	−0.07*	−0.02	0.10***	−0.01	0.03
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Higher Education	−0.00	−0.01	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.04	0.04
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Observations	1,599	1,601	1,623	1,623	1,623	1,623	1,628
R^2	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.001	0.00	0.00	0.01
F Statistic (df = 3)	2.85**	0.26	1.26	0.86	2.59*	1.53	3.49**
Note:							*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

B.3: Floor/ceiling effect analyses

Tables B.4-B.7 report the percentage of respondents at either the floor (0) or ceiling (3) in the control experimental condition. For the lists with Putin as a sensitive item (Table B.4), we are most concerned about floor effects. Since revealing a lack of support for Putin is potentially sensitive, then respondents who neither support Putin nor any of the figures on the control list may feel compelled to report support for one figure in the treatment list. As a result, estimates of support for Putin could be artificially inflated if there are many respondents who do not support any of the control list figures.

As such, the fact that there is a relatively high proportion of respondents at the floor across all list experiments with Putin as a sensitive item (ranging from 19% to 37%) is cause for concern. Two aspects of the experiment ameliorate this concern. First, though the percentage of respondents at the floor can vary substantially between experiments across waves, this variation has no clear relationship with the level of deflation we observe in the lists vis-a-vis the direct questions. Second, the proportion of respondents at the floor does not vary substantially between 2015 and 2021, indicating that the difference in levels of deflation cannot be attributed to variation in floor effects.

In the case of experiments with Navalny as the sensitive item, our concern is ceiling effects. Since revealing support for Navalny is sensitive, then respondents who support all control list items and Navalny may feel compelled to report fewer than four items in the treatment list. This effect could artificially deflate estimated support for Navalny. Luckily, there are relatively few respondents in the ceiling for the lists with Navalny as the sensitive item (Table B.6), minimizing concerns about these effects.

Table B.4: Percentage of control list respondents at floor or ceiling in Putin list experiments

	Contemporary		Historical		International		Statement A	
	% Floor	% Ceiling	% Floor	% Ceiling	% Floor	% Ceiling	% Floor	% Ceiling
2015								
January	33%	12%	26%	7%				
March	36%	16%	35%	5%				
2020-2021								
November	32%	7%	22%	3%				
February			31%	4%				
March	34%	11%	26%	5%				
June	31%	10%			37%	6%		
2022								
June			19%	6%			34%	5%

Table B.5: Percentage of control list respondents at floor or ceiling in Castro list experiments

	International		Statement B	
	% Floor	% Ceiling	% Floor	% Ceiling
2015				
March	25%	6%		
2021				
March	35%	6%		
2022				
June	44%	3%	23%	6%

Note: 2015 international control list consisted of Merkel/Mandela/Lukashenko, in 2021-2022 Lukashenko replaced with Nazarbaev.

Table B.6: Percentage of control list respondents at floor or ceiling in 2021 Navalny list experiments

	Contemporary		Society	
	% Floor	% Ceiling	% Floor	% Ceiling
February	34%	7%	53%	2%
March			52%	1%

Table B.7: Percentage of control list respondents at floor or ceiling in June 2021 placebo list experiments

	% Floor	% Ceiling
Brezhnev	31%	5%
Grudinin	53%	1%

B.4: Direct question vs. list responses

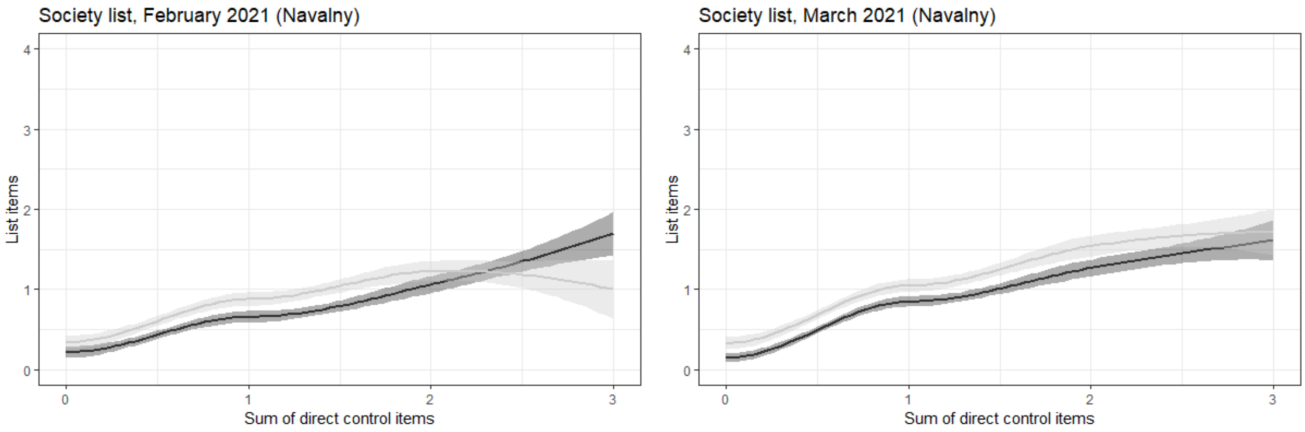
To further investigate the possibility of design failure, including potential ceiling and floor effects, we graphically analyze the relationship between the sum of control list figures a respondent directly reports supporting for a given list and their list responses. Figures B.1-B.3 present these analyses by control list items.

In each graphic there are two lines, with the dark line representing the list treatment condition and the light line representing the control condition. Since there are more items in the list treatment condition, we expect the dark line to run above the light item. Furthermore, the treatment line should run roughly parallel to the control line, indicating that the proportion of respondents who support the sensitive figure is roughly constant across the values of control list figures whom they directly support. In the context of this project, a particular concern would be a particularly large difference between the lines at

the value of zero on the horizontal axis. Such a phenomenon would suggest floor effects, since it would be evidence that some proportion of respondents who support no control list figures directly are falsely reporting support for the sensitive item to avoid revealing their lack of support.

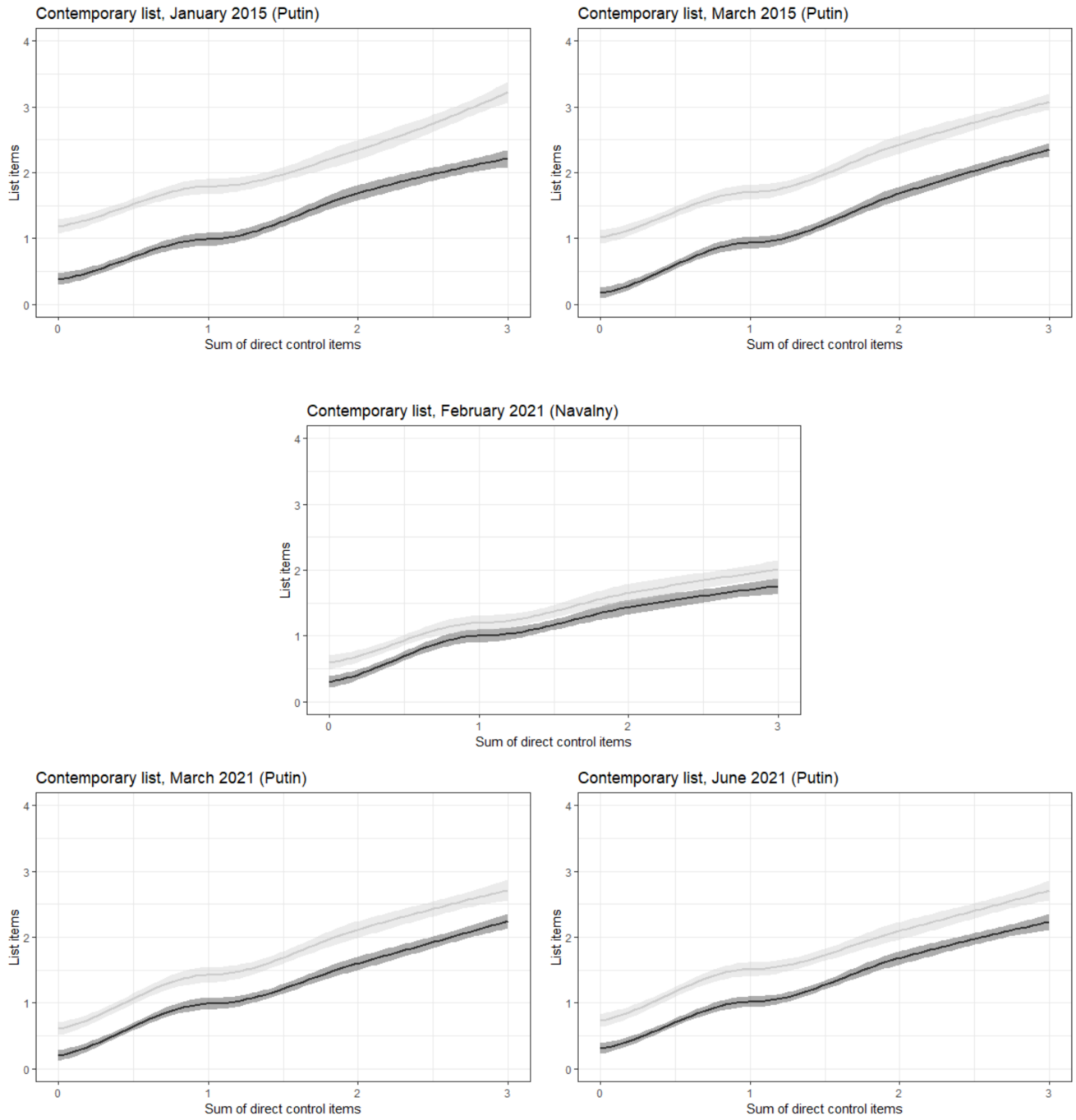
Figures B.1-B.3 provide little evidence of floor effects: the dark and light lines run roughly parallel in all figures save for those in Figure B.1. Figure B.1 is the society list with Navalny as a sensitive item; the lines overlap at high values of the horizontal axis because there are exceedingly few respondents at the ceiling (per the direct questions).

Figure B.1: Relationship between direct support for society figures and list responses



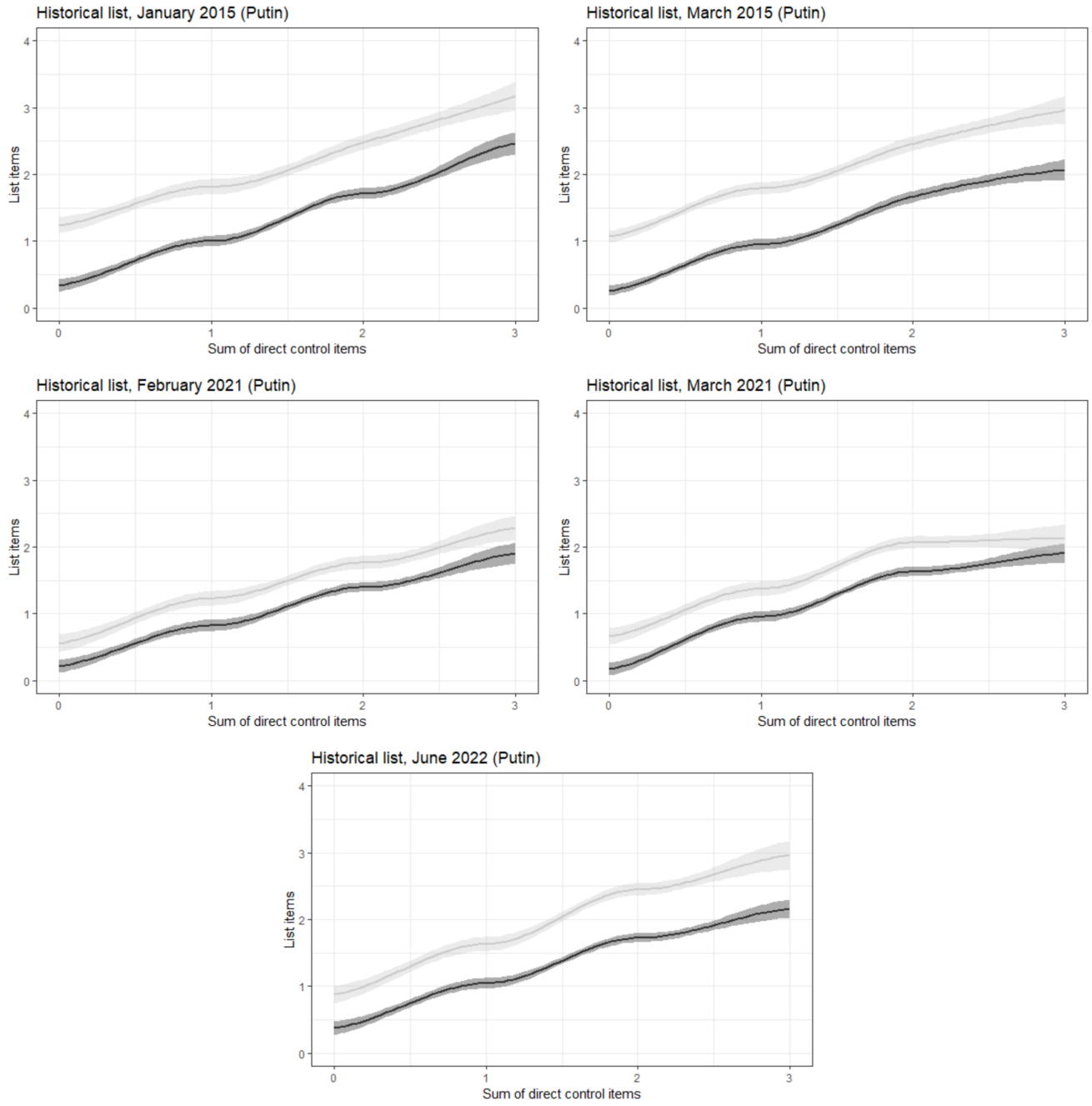
Note: Lines estimated using LOESS; dark represents the line for the treatment condition, light the line for the control condition.

Figure B.2: Relationship between direct support for contemporary political figures and list responses



Note: Lines estimated using LOESS; dark represents the line for the treatment condition, light the line for the control condition.

Figure B.3: Relationship between direct support for historical political figures and list responses



Note: Lines estimated using LOESS; dark represents the line for the treatment condition, light the line for the control condition.

B.5: Histograms of list experiment responses

Figure B.4: Histogram of responses to historical list experiment (sensitive item: Putin) by experimental condition

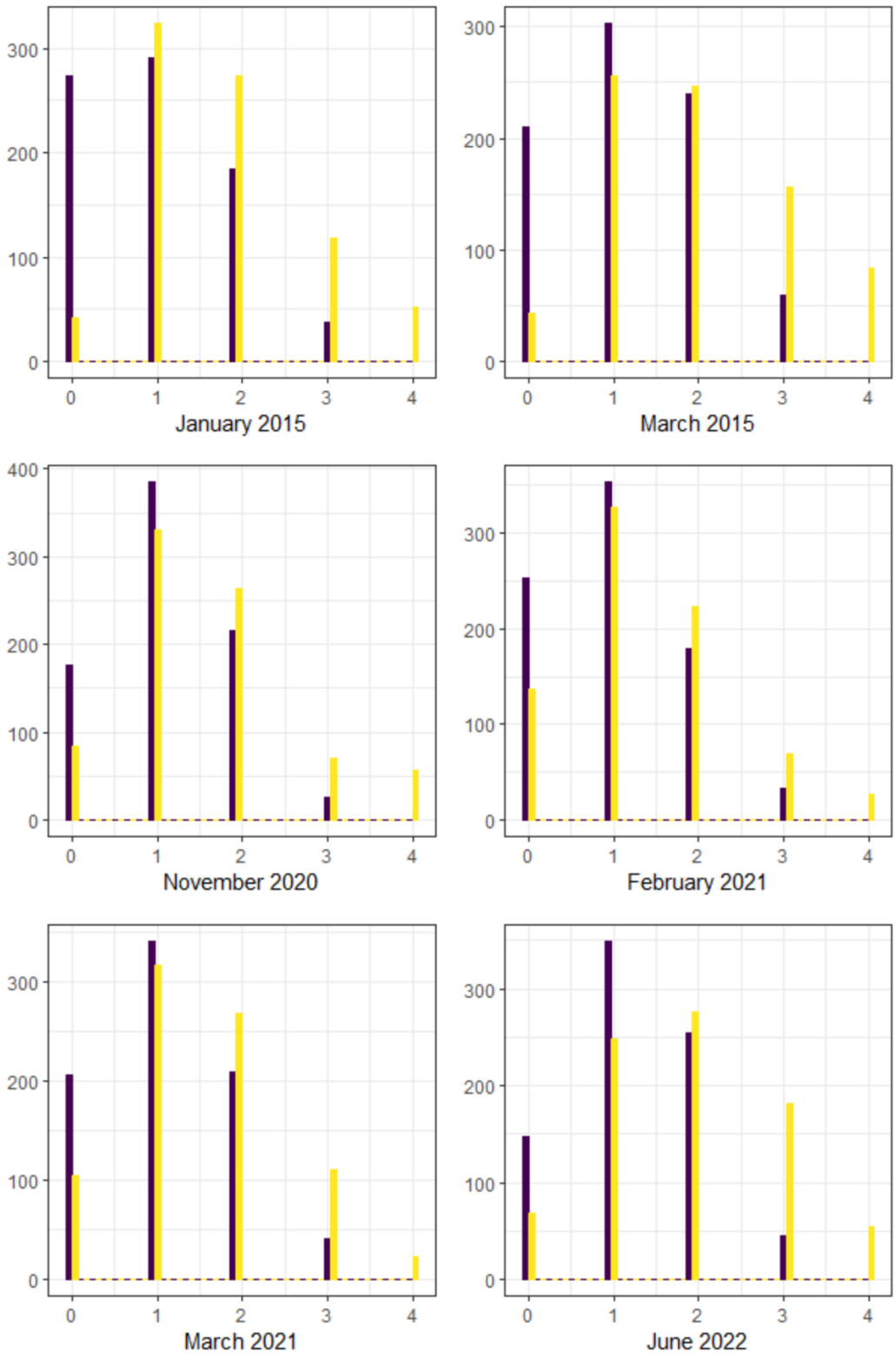


Figure B.5 Histogram of responses to contemporary list experiment by experimental condition

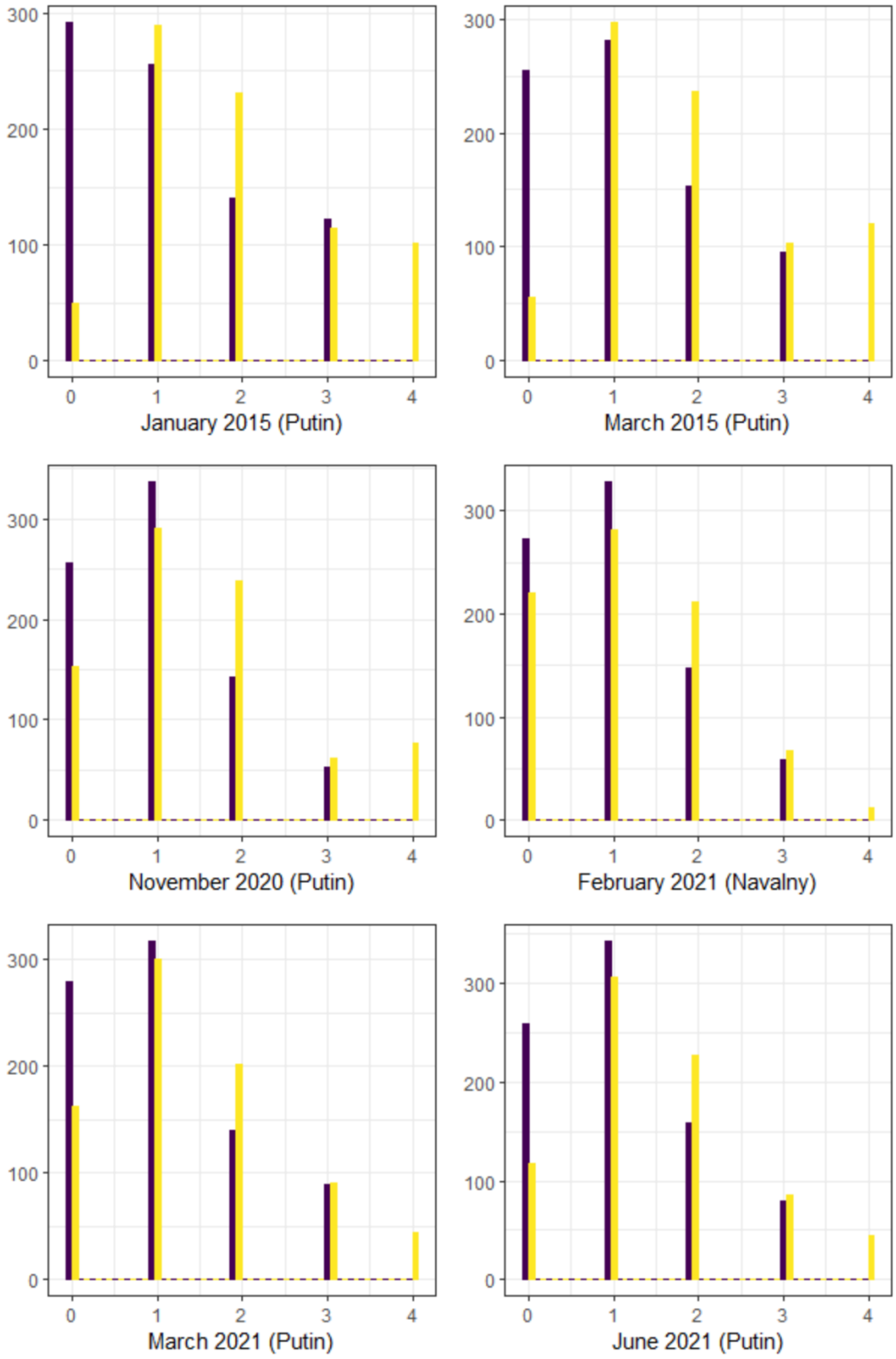


Figure B.6: Histogram of responses to international list experiment by experimental condition

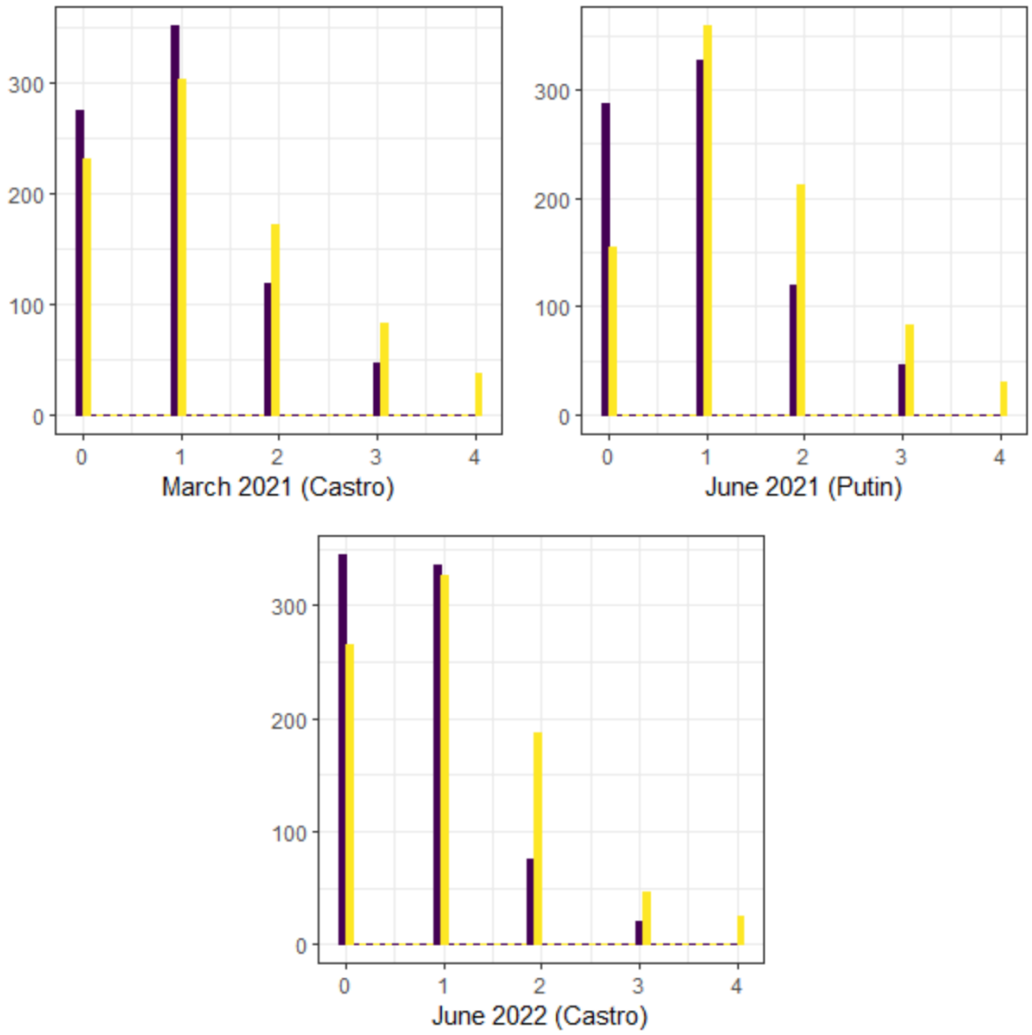


Figure B.7: Histogram of responses to statement list experiments by experimental condition (June 2022)

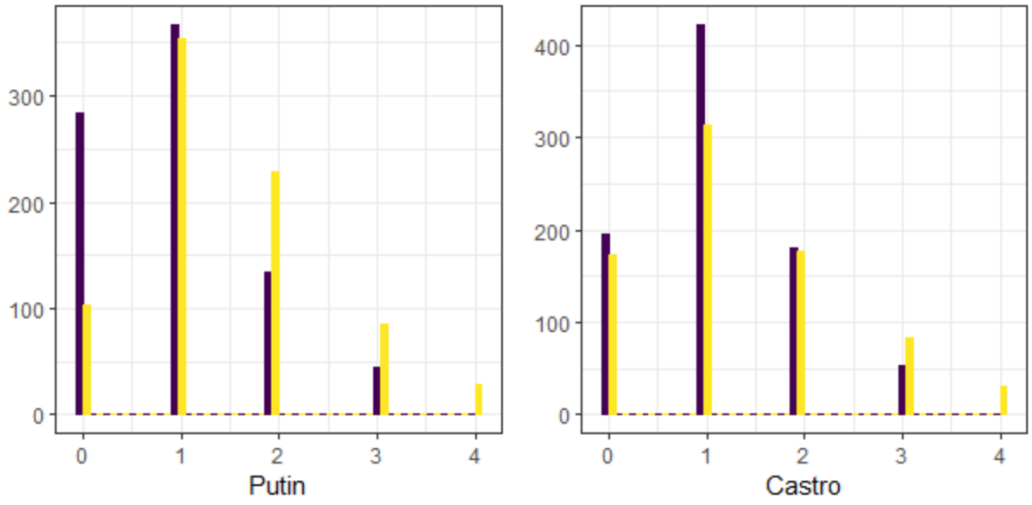


Figure B.8: Histogram of responses to society list experiments (sensitive item: Navalny) by experimental condition

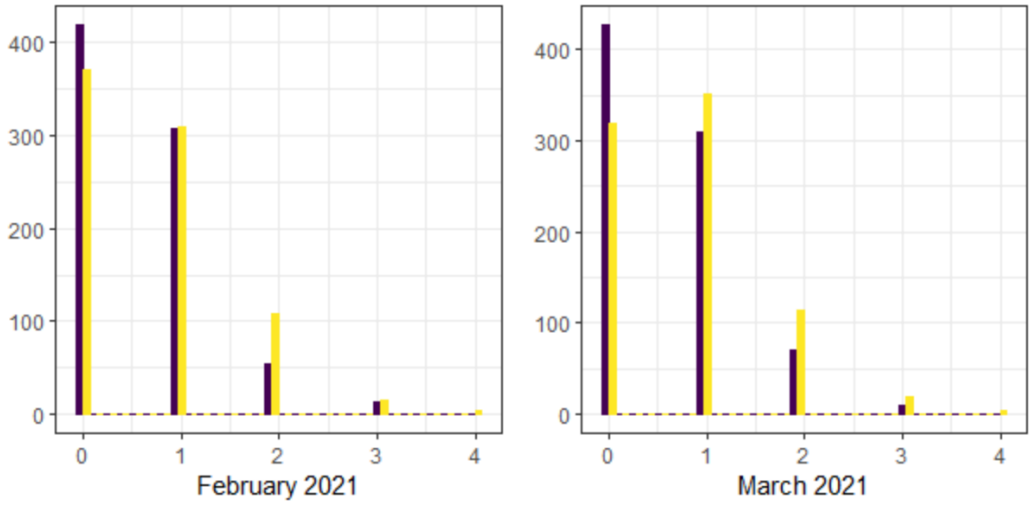
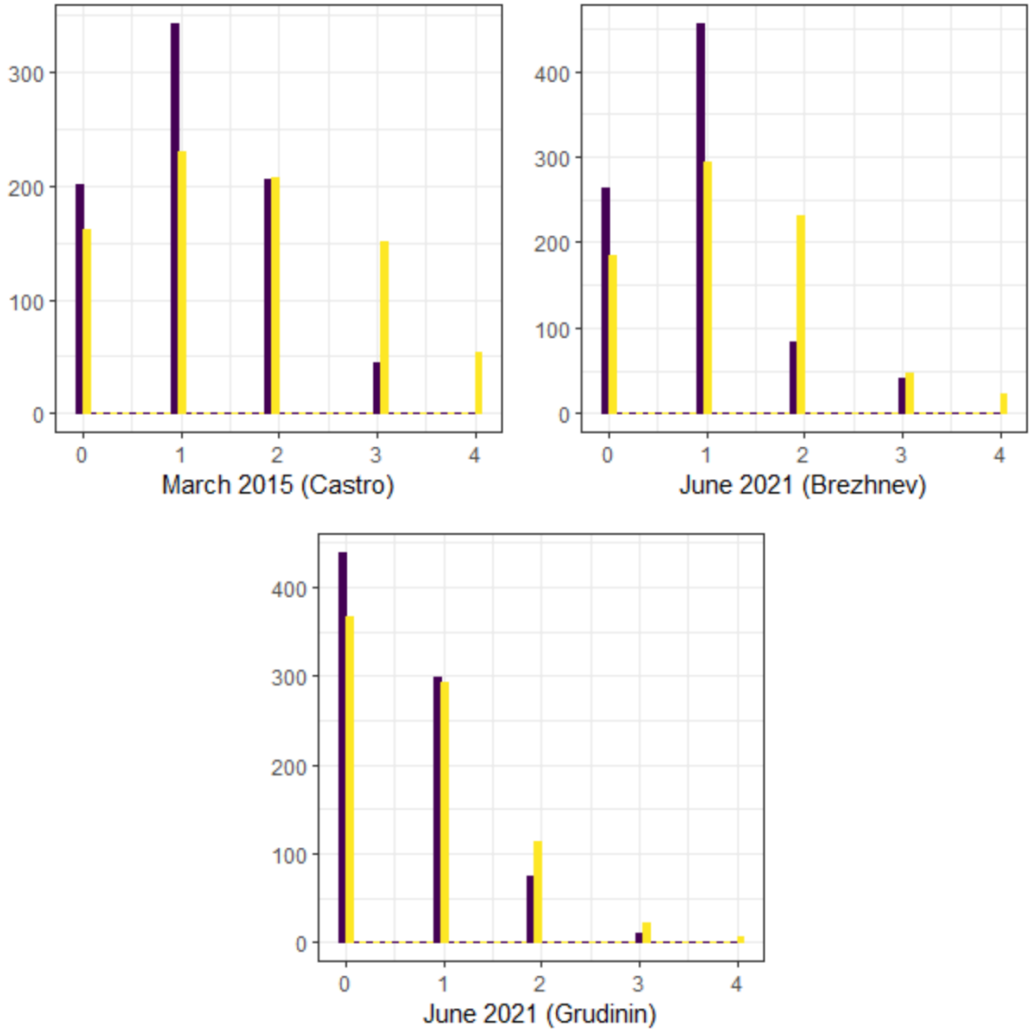


Figure B.9: Histogram of responses to unique placebo list experiments by experimental condition



B.6: Blair/Imai floor effect analyses

Due to the potential presence of floor effects, we run additional analyses of the list experiments using the Blair and Imai (2012) floor effect maximum likelihood algorithm. Tables B.8-B12 report the results of these analyses, referring to the standard difference-in-means list estimates of the prevalence of support for a given political figure as "Standard;" "B/I" refers to the floor-effect maximum-likelihood estimate of this quantity. For ease of presentation, we do not include 95% CIs about the B/I estimates; however, uncertainty is very low in this context and the CI range is generally +/2 percentage points about the reported estimate.

In general, the Blair/Imai algorithms return similar estimates to those of our preferred approach. The primary exception is the estimates of support for Putin in 2015 (Table B.8), where the point estimates diverge by 8–19 percentage points. Mechanically, the explanation for this difference is likely that the ratio of zeros in the control vs. treatment lists is substantially different for the Putin lists in 2015 vs. 2021–2 (see Appendix B.5 for a visualization). There is a roughly 20–30 percentage point difference in the percentage of zeroes across treatment conditions in the historical list in 2015, vs 10–14 percentage points in 2020–2; for the contemporary list the equivalent quantities are 26–30 percentage points in 2015 vs 14–16 percentage points in 2020-1.

Substantively, this difference implies one of two possibilities. First, there may be floor effects in estimated support for Putin in the 2015 lists. Second, many respondents may have supported *only* Putin among the political figures in the contemporary and historical lists in 2015. The comparison of direct to list responses in Appendix B.4 lends credence to the latter possibility, as it provides no evidence of an abnormal difference in the list responses between respondents who did not directly support any figures on the relevant list and those who supported any other number of figures.

Table B.8: Estimated support for Putin in 2015 from direct questions and list experiments

	Direct	Contemporary list		Historical list	
		Standard	B/I	Standard	B/I
January	86%	81% (70%, 91%)	67%	79% (69%, 89%)	71%
March	88%	80% (69%, 90%)	68%	79% (70%, 88%)	60%

Values in parentheses represent 95% confidence intervals.

Table B.9: Estimated support for Putin in 2020–2021 from direct questions and list experiments

	Direct	Contemporary list		Historical list		International list	
		Standard	B/I	Standard	B/I	Standard	B/I
Nov 2020	63%	54% (44%, 64%)	50%	50% (41%, 58%)	49%		
Feb 2021	63%			40% (31%, 49%)	39%		
Mar 2021	63%	40% (30%, 50%)	40%	44% (36%, 53%)	45%		
Jun 2021	69%	46% (36%, 56%)	44%			48% (38%, 57%)	44%

Values in parentheses represent 95% confidence intervals.

Table B.10: Estimated support for placebo figures in 2021 from direct questions and list experiments

	Castro (March 2015)	Castro (March 2021)	Brezhnev (June 2021)	Grudinin (June 2021)
Direct estimate	60%	56%	61%	30%
Standard list	51% (41%, 61%)	34% (25%, 44%)	39% (30%, 47%)	18% (10%, 26%)
B/I list	53%	37%	40%	22%

Values in parentheses represent 95% confidence intervals.

Table B.11: Estimated support for Navalny in 2021 from direct questions and list experiments

	Direct	Contemporary list		Society list	
		Standard	B/I	Standard	B/I
February	20%	21% (12%, 31%)	28%	15% (8%, 23%)	18%
March	22%			23% (15%, 30%)	23%

Values in parentheses represent 95% confidence intervals.

Table B.12: Estimated support for Putin and Castro, June 2022

	Putin		Castro	
Direct estimate	84%		54%	
	Historical list	Statement list	International list	Statement list
Standard list	63% (54%, 72%)	55% (46%, 64%)	40% (32%, 49%)	23% (14%, 33%)
B/I list	60%	56%	41%	29%

Values in parentheses represent 95% confidence intervals.

C: Double list experiments

We follow the recommendation of Glynn (2012) to estimate the prevalence of at least one sensitive figure in each wave using double list experiments. In double list experiments, approximately half of the respondents are randomly assigned to the control condition in the first experiment and the treatment condition in the second; the other half are assigned to the treatment condition in the first experiment and the control condition in the second. The sensitive item is the same in both experiments. The prevalence of the sensitive item can then be estimated using the data from both experiments, resulting in substantially more efficient estimates.

For January 2015, March 2015, March 2021, June 2021 and June 2022 we use the double list experiments to estimate the prevalence of the support for Putin; the first three double lists use the contemporary and historical lists, the June 2021 list uses the contemporary and international list, and the June 2022 list uses the historical list and a statement list. The February 2022 double list consists of data from the contemporary and society lists, which we use to estimate the prevalence of support for Navalny. The June 2022 wave also includes a double list experiment on the prevalence of support for Castro (the international list and a statement list).

In addition to estimating the prevalence of the sensitive item, we can also use the double lists to estimate the difference between the list and direct estimates of support for these political figures. To do so, we follow the Blair and Imai (2012) approach of simulating an appropriately large number of draws from the distributions of both the double list and direct estimates of support for these figures, then using the difference between these draws to calculate both the average difference between the estimates and appropriate uncertainty intervals.

Appendix Table C.1 reports results from the double list experiments.

In addition to estimating the difference between direct and list experiment estimates of support for political figures, we use a similar technique to estimate the difference between these differences across time. Specifically, the double list experiments in March 2015 and March 2021 are directly comparable (they consist of the same set of list experiments with the same sensitive figure, Putin). Specifically, we take a sufficiently large number of draws from the distributions of differences in both years, then use these differences to estimate both the average difference and an appropriate uncertainty interval. The estimated difference is 12%, with a 95% CI of (11%, 13%).

In plain English, March 2021 shows a difference between the double list and direct estimates of support for Putin that is 12 percentage points larger than the difference between the double list and direct estimates of support for Putin in March 2015. Furthermore, we can reject the null hypothesis of no difference between March 2021 and 2015 at the α=.05 level.

Table C.1: Double list experiment results

	Putin		Navalny		Castro	
	Double list estimate	Direct/List difference	Double list estimate	Direct/List difference	Double list estimate	Direct/List difference
2015						
January	80% (74%, 86%)	-7% (-13%, -0%)				
March	79% (73%, 85%)	-9% (-15%, -3%)				
2021						
February			18% (13%, 23%)	-2% (-7%, 4%)		
March	42% (37%, 47%)	-21% (-27%, -15%)				
June	47% (41%, 52%)	-22% (-28%, -16%)				
2022						
June	59% (53%, 65%)	-25% (-31%, -19%)			32% (26%, 37%)	-23% (-28%, -17%)

Values in parentheses represent 95% confidence intervals about the point estimates.

D: Patterns of support and nonresponse for different political figures across survey waves

Appendix Table D.1 tracks patterns of directly-reported support for different political figures across survey waves, ordered by rank position in June 2021 as possible, then by position in the temporally most proximate survey wave. While Putin has demonstrated the most drastic changes of any political figure (from 88% in January 2015 to 63% in February 2021 to 84% in June 2022), other figures have also experienced large changes in public sentiment. In particular, Stalin's popularity has increased substantially across survey waves (from 45% in January 2015 to 66% in June 2022). In contrast, Nelson Mandela's popularity has somewhat inexplicably moved in the opposite direction (from 43% in March 2015 to 26% in June 2021).

Table D.1: Direct support for different political figures, across survey waves

	January 2015	March 2015	November 2020	February 2021	March 2021	June 2021	June 2022
Putin	**0.88**	**0.88**	**0.63**	**0.63**	**0.63**	**0.69**	**0.84**
Lukashenko		0.68					
Stalin	0.45	0.45		0.61	0.60	0.64	0.66
Brezhnev	0.45	0.45		0.58	0.58	0.61	0.56
Castro		0.60			0.56		0.54
Nazarbaev					0.52	0.50	
Zhirinovsky	0.42	0.42		0.51	0.48	0.47	
Mikhalkov				0.48	0.40	0.42	
Zyuganov	0.49	0.49		0.37	0.36	0.37	
Mironov	0.39	0.39		0.35	0.34	0.32	
Grudinin				0.30	0.31	0.30	
Merkel		0.19			0.28	0.28	
Mandela		0.43			0.28	0.26	
Navalny				**0.20**	**0.22**		
Kudrin						0.19	
Yeltsin	0.15	0.15		0.19	0.18	0.17	0.16
Gorbachev						0.17	
Sobchak				0.07	0.07	0.06	

Appendix Table D.1 tracks patterns of item nonresponse related to directly-reported support for different political figures across survey waves, ordered by rank position in June 2021 as possible, then by position in the temporally most proximate survey wave.

If anything, item nonresponse seems to be linked to the salience of the figure, as opposed to sensitivity. For example, Nelson Mandela and Pavel Grudinin have the highest levels of nonresponse (maximum of 15% and 12%, respectively), whereas both Putin and Navalny have relatively low levels of nonresponse (both with a maximum of 4%). The average level of nonresponse in directly-reported support for Putin is substantively quite similar between 2015 and 2020-2022; while it is slightly higher in 2020-2022, the increase in nonresponse is actually greater for control list figures. These patterns provide no evidence that the sensitivity of support for Putin has increased over time.

Table D.2: Proportion of nonresponse in direct support for different political figures, across survey waves

	January 2015	March 2015	November 2020	February 2021	March 2021	June 2021	June 2022
Mandela		0.04			0.15	0.12	
Grudinin				0.10	0.12	0.10	
Kudrin						0.09	
Mironov	0.02	0.02		0.06	0.09	0.07	
Nazarbaev					0.07	0.07	
Castro		0.02			0.08		0.12
Merkel		0.02			0.08	0.06	
Mikhalkov				0.05	0.07	0.05	
Navalny				**0.03**	**0.04**		
Brezhnev	0.02	0.02		0.03	0.04	0.04	0.05
Stalin	0.02	0.02		0.03	0.04	0.04	0.05
Lukashenko		0.01					
Zyuganov	0.01	0.01		0.04	0.04	0.04	
Putin	**0.01**	**0.01**	**0.01**	**0.02**	**0.02**	**0.04**	**0.02**
Gorbachev						0.03	
Yeltsin	0.01	0.01		0.02	0.03	0.02	0.03
Zhirinovsky	0.01	0.01		0.03	0.02	0.02	
Sobchak				0.02	0.02	0.02	

E: Russian-language list experiment questions

We use the formulation in Figure E.1 for all political figure lists, changing only the figures on the list. We use the formulation in Figure E.2 for all political statement lists. As the figure illustrates, list items for this formulation vary by experiment.

Figure E.1. Example political figure list experiment.

ПОСМОТРИТЕ НА ЭТОТ СПИСОК ПОЛИТИКОВ И СКАЖИТЕ, ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТЬ СКОЛЬКИХ ИЗ ЭТИХ ПОЛИТИКОВ ВЫ В ЦЕЛОМ ОДОБРЯЕТЕ. НЕ НАЗЫВАЙТЕ КОНКРЕТНЫЕ ИМЕНА - ТОЛЬКО ОТМЕТЬТЕ В СТРОКЕ НИЖЕ ЦИФРОЙ ОТ 0 ДО 4 СКОЛЬКО ИЗ ЭТИХ ПОЛИТИКОВ ВЫ В ЦЕЛОМ ОДОБРЯЕТЕ.

Иосиф Сталин
Леонид Брежнев
Борис Ельцин
[Владимир Путин]

Figure E.2. Example statement list experiment with two different lists.

ПОСМОТРИТЕ НА ЭТОТ СПИСОК УТВЕРЖДЕНИЙ И СКАЖИТЕ, СКОЛЬКО ИЗ НИХ ПОДХОДИТ ВАМ ЛИЧНО. НЕ ГОВОРИТЕ МНЕ, КАКИЕ ИМЕННО УТВЕРЖДЕНИЯ ВАМ ПОДХОДЯТ - ТОЛЬКО ОТМЕТЬТЕ В СТРОКЕ НИЖЕ ЦИФРОЙ ОТ 0 ДО 3 СКОЛЬКО ИЗ ЭТИХ УТВЕРЖДЕНИЙ ВАМ ПОДХОДИТ.

Putin list:
Обычно я читаю более одной газеты или журнала в неделю.
Я могу назвать имя Председателя Конституционного Суда РФ.
Я доволен(а) уровнем своего дохода.
[Я поддерживаю деятельность Владимира Путина]

Castro list:
Я могу назвать имя Генерального секретаря ООН.
Я смотрю телевизор, YouTube (Ютуб) или стриминговые сервисы (IVI, OKKO, Кинопоиск и др.) хотя бы раз в неделю.
Я знаю человека, который посещал Кубу.
[Я поддерживаю деятельность Фиделя Кастро.]