

PUBLIC OPINION IN UKRAINE
FINDINGS FROM AN IFES OCTOBER 2008 SURVEY



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This report details the findings from the latest IFES survey in Ukraine. This is the 17th public opinion poll conducted in Ukraine by IFES and some of the findings from earlier surveys will be referenced in this briefing paper. The fieldwork for this most recent survey was conducted from October 17-28, 2008 with 1,254 respondents throughout Ukraine. This sample comprised a national sample of 1,189 respondents and an over-sample of 65 respondents in Kyiv. The data has been weighted by region, age, and gender to be nationally representative for the adult (18+) population of Ukraine. The margin of error for a sample of this size is plus/minus 2.75%. The fieldwork and data processing for the survey were conducted by KIIS, based in Kyiv. Funding for the survey was provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

General Perceptions of Political Situation and Economy

- Strong majorities of Ukrainians are dissatisfied with the political situation in Ukraine (93%) as well as the foreign policy of Ukraine (75%). There is similar pessimism regarding the economic situation in Ukraine with 93% of respondents describing the current economic situation as bad.
- High prices/inflation is considered the most serious problem that Ukraine faces as a country (70%), followed by general economic problems (42%), corruption (40%), poverty (39%), political bickering between leaders (39%), political instability/general political problems (36%), unemployment (26%) and problems with Russia (18%).
- Most Ukrainians are worried that Ukraine is on a path toward instability and chaos (76%), while only 6% say Ukraine is on the path toward stability and 9% say they don't know.
- Over six in ten (64%) of Ukrainians say they are interested in politics and government, while a majority (60%) say they have at least a fair amount of information and 22% say they have a great deal of information.

Attitudes about Corruption, the Economy, Politics and the Constitution

- An overwhelming 91% of Ukrainians believe corruption is common in Ukraine. Of the major institutions, Ukrainians believe corruption is a serious problem amongst hospitals (medical institutions) (81%), the police (78%), courts (77%), and universities/schools (69%).
- Most Ukrainians see a decline, instead of improvement, over the past year in the political situation in Ukraine (89% decline), the economic situation in Ukraine (84% decline), relations with Russia (68%) and the fight against corruption (49%). A plurality of respondents see no change in the unity of Ukrainian citizens (43%), relations with Western countries (41%) or Ukraine's national security (41%).
- Regarding regional, ethnic, and ideological divisions in Ukraine, a plurality (30%) predict that over the next 5 years Ukraine will remain divided, while 21% say they will achieve unity, 10% say Ukraine will neither divide nor unify, 9% say Ukraine is not divided, and 25% don't know.
- When asked about possible changes to the Constitution that have recently been discussed, over four in ten (43%) would like to see a clearer division of responsibilities between the executive, parliament and the government and to make it easier to punish public officials who commit wrongdoing (46%). Nearly four in 10 (38%) of respondents say more power should be given to the parliament, 25% say more power should be given

to the president, and 12% say the divisions should stay the same if the Constitution were to change the division of powers.

Democracy, Institutions, and NGOs

- When asked what defines a democracy, most respondents believe it means the protection of human rights (61%). Respondents also identify fair/consistent enforcement of laws (45%), everybody having work (42%), no official corruption (41%), state support of those unable to work (32%), state support of pensioners (32%), freedom of speech (31%) as tenets of democracy. A small proportion of respondents (24%) associate democracy with the freedom to vote, freedom of religion (15%), and freedom of association (9%).
- A majority of respondents do not believe Ukraine is a democracy (55%), with only 15% saying it is a democracy, 21% saying it's both a democracy and not a democracy, and 9% saying they do not know.
- Confidence in many institutions is low. Respondents have no or little confidence in the Verkhovna Rada (83%), President Viktor Yushchenko (84%), the Cabinet of Ministers (72%), Former Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich (64%), Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko (63%) or the Central Election Commission (62%).
- Similar to previous years, nearly six and ten (57%) of Ukrainians do not know of any active NGOs in Ukraine, while only 15% do and 21% do not even know what an NGO is. Of those who are aware of NGOs, they believe they are working on a wide-range of issues in Ukraine, such as financial help for the poor (11%), human rights (9%), work with disabled people (9%), health care (8%), environmental protection (8%), children's rights (6%), however 37% do not know or refused to answer. Despite a low level of knowledge about NGOs and their work, more Ukrainians say they are necessary (50%) than unnecessary (20%), but 30% say they do not know or refused to answer.
- Similar to the pessimism surrounding current political and economic situation in Ukraine, most Ukrainians disagree that voting giving people like them an influence in decision-making (78%) or that people like them can influence decisions made by the government (85%).
- Dissatisfaction with the representativeness of major political parties is also clear. Nearly half of Ukrainians (47%) believe only some political parties in Ukraine address issues facing the country, while 27% say no party addresses issues, 15% do not know or refused, and only 11% believe they do. A strong 56% say political parties only serve their own interests, 19% say they serve business interests, 11% say 'those in power' and a mere 3% say the Ukrainian people.

Opinions on Possible Rada Election

- A majority of Ukrainians (59%) say that they are very or somewhat likely to vote if an election takes place in December 2008. This percentage is significantly lower than the 85% who expressed a likelihood of voting in the September 2007 survey, and may reflect voter fatigue among Ukrainians. There is little difference between men and women in likelihood of voting, and there is similar lack of difference among key age groups.
- Among those who profess a likelihood of voting, BYUT (26%) and the Party of Regions (26%) receive the highest level of support. The Communist Party is supported by 5% while the Our Ukraine bloc is supported by only 2%. The Party of Arseniy Yatsenuk is

supported by 2%, All Ukrainian Union 'Freedom' by 1%, and the Socialist Party by 1%. Nineteen percent say they are still undecided about what party they would support if an election is held in December. For coalition support, 13% would like to see a Grand Coalition of Byut, Party of Regions and Our Ukraine, 10% would like to see Byut-Party of Regions, 8% Byut-Regions-Socialists, 19% say other combinations, but half of respondents say they don't know or refused to answer.

- While a significant percentage of Ukrainians say they will vote in the election, most Ukrainians in general do not believe that the parliament elected in this election will serve its entire term (54%) and only 19% believe it will.
- More Ukrainians blame President Yuschenko (37%) for the dissolution of the Orange Coalition on September 16, 2008, than the percentage who blame both President Yuschenko and Prime Minister Tymoschenko (28%) or Tymoschenko alone (10%). Three percent blame Viktor Yanukovych.

EU and NATO Membership

- More Ukrainians say they would vote to join the EU (40%) than those who would vote against (28%). Those who would vote to join cite higher living standards (42%) and economic development/stability (25%) as reasons why they are in favor. Those who would vote against say Ukraine is not ready (31%), that there is no point/benefit for Ukraine (12%), or Ukraine should join Russia (11%).
- More Ukrainians know at least a little (55%) about NATO than those who know not much or none at all (37%). Most who have heard about NATO have gotten their information from Ukrainian TV channels (80%), word of mouth (45%), Ukrainian newspapers (29%), or Russian TV channels (25%).
- Most Ukrainians would vote against joining NATO (58%) than those who would vote in favor (23%), but 10% are indecisive. Those who would vote in favor cite security and protection of Ukraine as a reason (54%) and those who would vote against don't want Ukrainian troops used for NATO campaigns (24%) or that it is unnecessary for Ukraine (18%). Of those who are indecisive, most say they don't favor one side or the other because they lack proper knowledge of NATO (42%).

Current Events

- There has been discussion about what actions to take in regards to the Ukrainian leasing of harbor space to Russian Fleets in a Crimea Peninsula port until 2017. Nearly half of respondents (47%) say they think Russia's Black Sea Fleet should withdraw by May 2017 if the agreement is not prolonged, 24% say Russia's Black Sea Fleet should remain permanently based, and 10% think the fleet should immediately leave. Over four in ten (45%) agree with President Yushchenko's presidential decree that required Russian warships to seek 72-hour advance permission to move in the Black Sea, while 24% disagree and 31% are not sure or don't know.
- When asked about the conflict between Georgia and Russia, more respondents blame Georgia (30%) than Russia (18%), however 27% blame both equally. Not surprisingly, more respondents oppose President Yushchenko's participation in the delegation to Georgia and support of Georgia during the crisis (42%), than those who agree (20%). Still, 39% do not know or refused to answer the question. Those who agree say it's because they feel solidarity with Georgia (19%). Those who disagree say it's because Ukraine should keep its neutrality (23%), they don't want confrontation with Russia

(14%), do not trust President Yuschenko (13%), or believe Georgia was the aggressor (8%).

- Forty percent of Ukrainians believe the conflict between Russia and Georgia means Russia will be more aggressive with Ukraine in the future and only 7% believe it will be less aggressive. Twenty-nine percent believe there will be no change in Russia's relations with Ukraine and 23% do not know or refused to answer the question.