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# KEY FINDINGS – IFES SEPTEMBER 2014 SURVEY IN UKRAINE



**September 2014**

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# **KEY FINDINGS – IFES**

## **September 2014 Survey in Ukraine**



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## Methodology

IFES fielded a national survey in Ukraine (excluding Crimea) from September 5-13, 2014. Given the difficulty of conducting fieldwork due to the military conflict in many parts of Donetsk and Luhansk, the sampling utilized for this survey has some notable differences from previous IFES surveys in Ukraine and requires the reader to exercise caution when interpreting results. IFES and its fieldwork partner, the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS), conducted the survey face-to-face as usual in all parts of Ukraine excluding Luhansk and some parts of Donetsk controlled by separatist forces. In Donetsk, face-to-face surveys were conducted in parts of the oblast controlled by government forces and in Donetsk city, while a total of 207 phone interviews were also conducted in Donetsk and Luhansk. No phone interviews were possible in Luhansk city due to degraded infrastructure in the city. Given these complications with sampling, these key findings are presented using references to three different populations:

- **Ukrainians outside Donbas:** When this term is used in the document below, it is meant to describe the achieved sample from face-to-face interviews outside Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. This sample is representative of this part of the Ukrainian population.
- **Donbas:** When this term is used, it is meant to describe the combined achieved sample from face-to-face and telephone interviews in Donetsk and Luhansk. Given the population shifts in these two oblasts since the conflict started, and the general non-representativeness of telephone polling in Ukraine as well as lack of access to Luhansk city, IFES does not believe that this sample is representative of the population of the Donbas region. Data from this sample, however, is indicative of opinions that may be held in these two oblasts and is provided to allow the reader to compare findings between this region and the rest of Ukraine. As this data relies on telephone polling which does not allow for long questionnaires, the number of questions addressed using this sample is smaller than for the national survey.
- **Donetsk:** Face-to-face interviews were conducted in parts of Donetsk controlled by government forces and in Donetsk city. As such, all questions in the survey were asked in Donetsk. However, the data may not be completely representative of the population of Donetsk due to population transfers in the oblast and the inability to conduct face-to-face interviews in some parts of the oblast. This data is selectively provided in the report.

## Situation in the Country

As Ukrainians prepare to head to the polls for parliamentary elections on October 26, they have mixed views on the state of their country. Ukrainians are only slightly more likely to say that the country is headed in the wrong direction rather than the right direction, yet a large majority are also dissatisfied with the state of affairs in many socio-political sectors and believe that things have gotten worse in these sectors over the past six months.

- Thirty-six percent of Ukrainians outside Donbas believe the country is headed in the right direction, while 39% believe it is headed in the wrong direction. In Donbas, a majority (53%) believes the country is headed in the wrong direction while 16% believe it is headed in the right direction. Forty-nine percent in the North and Kyiv believe the country is headed in the right direction compared to 24% who believe it is headed in the wrong direction, while the percentages are as following in other regions: West (42% right, 34% wrong), Center (36%, 34%), South (26%, 50%), and East outside Donbas (23%, 58%).

- The possibility of war with Russia is the dominant concern for Ukrainians outside Donbas. Sixty-seven percent outside Donbas mentioned this concern as a major issue facing the country, with 31% also mentioning chaos in the country. Economic concerns are also prominent with inflation (39%), poverty (26%), unemployment (24%), and general economic problems (21%) being mentioned. Political instability and bickering between political leaders is mentioned by 27%, corruption by 27%, and energy dependency by 15%. In Donbas the possibility of war with Russia is mentioned by 15%, far less than in other parts of the country. Chaos in the county is mentioned by 25% in Donbas, and economic concerns also dominate (inflation 17%, poverty 13%, and unemployment 10%).
- The vast majority of Ukrainians believe that the overall situation in the country has gotten worse in the past six months. Outside Donbas, 69% believe that the situation is somewhat or definitely worse while 15% believe the situation is better and 9% believe the situation has not changed in the past six months. In Donetsk, 94% believe the situation is definitely or somewhat worse.
- Ukrainian views on the worsening situation in the country over the past six months is reflected in their evaluation of perceived decline in several socio-political sectors. Respondents were asked whether the situation in these sectors had improved, declined, or exhibited no change since President Poroshenko took office. Among Ukrainians outside Donbas, the following evaluations are provided:
  - Economic situation (57% decline, 31% no change, 7% improvement)
  - Political stability (36% decline, 33% no change, 23% improvement)
  - Fight against corruption (27% decline, 56% no change, 9% improvement)
  - Maintenance of law and order (20% decline, 47% no change, 25% improvement)
  - Respect for rights (19% decline, 43% no change, 31% improvement)
  - Unity of Ukrainian citizens (26% decline, 23% no change, 45% improvement)
- While significantly more believe that there has been a decline rather than improvement in the economic situation, political stability, and fight against corruption, more improvement than decline is cited for the maintenance of law and order, respect for rights of citizens, and the unity of Ukrainian citizens.
- Ukrainians outside Donbas also tend to be more dissatisfied than satisfied with President Poroshenko's handling of important issues. Ninety percent are dissatisfied with his efforts to address inflation, 83% with efforts to create jobs, 78% with limiting the influence of oligarchs, 77% with addressing corruption, 72% in managing relations with Russia, and 71% in Poroshenko's efforts to create political stability. He gets more mixed responses in his efforts to bridge the regional divide in Ukraine (31% satisfied, 56% dissatisfied) and in his efforts to create energy independence for Ukraine (38% satisfied, 46% dissatisfied). Respondents are more satisfied than dissatisfied with Poroshenko's efforts to address the status of Ukraine and the EU (53% satisfied, 31% dissatisfied) and his respect for rights of the media (51% satisfied, 33% dissatisfied).
- On the whole, Ukrainians are more optimistic about what the situation in Ukraine will be one year from now. Outside Donbas, 34% think the situation in a year will be definitely or somewhat better compared to 30% who think it will get worse, and 11% who believe nothing will change. In Donetsk, 55% think the situation will be worse, 18% think nothing will change in a year, and 12% are optimistic the situation will get better.

## Views on Leadership and Institutions

Despite negative evaluations on many issues in the country, most Ukrainians still express confidence in President Poroshenko and Prime Minister Yatsenyuk. The majority of Ukrainians also exhibit confidence in the military and in their local institutions.

- A majority of Ukrainians exhibit confidence in Poroshenko and Yatsenyuk. Twenty-two percent outside Donbas say they have a great deal of confidence in Poroshenko while 46% say they have a fair amount of confidence in him. For Yatsenyuk, these percentages are 18% and 42%, respectively. There are no other political leaders in whom a majority of Ukrainians outside Donbas express confidence. Forty-four percent express a great deal or fair amount of confidence in Anatoliy Hrytsenko, 41% in Vitaliy Klychko, 40% in Oleh Lyashko, and 31% in Oleh Tyahnybok. Only 15% express confidence in Yulia Tymoshenko while 78% express a lack of confidence in her. In Donbas, 51% express a lack of confidence in Poroshenko while 38% express confidence in him.
- This survey sees increased confidence in the Ukrainian military compared to recent IFES surveys in Ukraine. Among Ukrainians outside Donbas, 35% have a great deal of confidence in the military and 41% express a fair amount of confidence. This compares to only 37% who expressed at least some confidence in the military in areas outside Donbas in the 2013 survey and 44% in the 2012 survey. Thirty-five percent also express a great deal of confidence in pro-Ukrainian volunteer battalions and 31% express a fair amount of confidence. The *Verkhovna Rada* does not generate as much confidence with only 20% expressing a great deal or fair amount of confidence in it, while 39% express confidence in the Cabinet of Ministers, 34% in their Raion administrator, and 30% in their Oblast governor. As has been the trend in IFES surveys in the past, local institutions fare better than central-level or regional institutions. Forty-two percent express confidence in their city or village council and 53% express confidence in their mayor.
- In Donbas, 23% express confidence in the *Verkhovna Rada* (higher than among Ukrainians outside Donbas), and surprisingly, there is a higher percentage expressing confidence in the military than lacking confidence. While 46% express confidence in the Ukrainian military in Donbas, 34% express a lack of confidence.
- Ukrainians outside Donbas also express much greater confidence in the media based in Ukraine (67%), than in the Western media (42%) or the Russian media (5%). As would be expected, there is greater confidence in Russian media by residents of Donbas (26%) but it is interesting to note that 60% lack confidence in Russian media in Donbas.

## Parliamentary Elections

The survey data indicates that more than half of those in areas outside Donbas may vote in the upcoming October 26 parliamentary elections, and that the majority of these Ukrainians have positive impressions of the electoral process. President Poroshenko's party is the most-preferred party at this time among likely voters, but more than a third of likely voters are undecided about their party choice.

- Fifty-six percent of Ukrainians outside Donbas say they are very likely to vote in the October 26 parliamentary elections, while 26% say they are somewhat likely to vote. Given the relationship between survey data on likelihood of voting in previous IFES surveys and actual turnout, these figures point to turnout being between 55 and 60 percent in areas outside Donbas. In Donbas, 17% say they are very likely to vote and 23% say they are somewhat likely to vote. Of course, the

likelihood to vote in Donbas may change if there is a peace agreement that allows for voting to take place in areas currently occupied by separatist forces.

- In areas outside Donbas, the highest percentage of voters saying they are very likely to vote is in Western Ukraine (73%). The percentage of those saying they are very likely to vote is as follows in other regions: Central Ukraine (56%), the North and Kyiv (51%), Eastern Ukraine outside Donbas (48%), and Southern Ukraine (40%).
- Among those very likely to vote, 26% prefer the Poroshenko Bloc, followed by the Radical Party (11%), Batkivshchyna (8%), Gromadyanska Pozytsiya (6%), and Svoboda (4%). Other parties are listed at 8%. More than a third (36%) say they have yet to make up their mind, indicating that there is the potential for party preference to change in the campaign leading up to the election. It should also be noted that this survey went to the field before Prime Minister Yatsenyuk broke away from Batkivshchyna and formed his own People's Front Party. This development is likely to reduce some support for Batkivshchyna and perhaps change party preference significantly.
- Most Ukrainians outside Donbas expect the parliamentary elections to be at least reasonably free and fair. Nineteen percent expect the election to be completely free and fair and 40% expect it to be reasonably free and fair. Only 4% in Donbas expect the election to be completely free and fair and 23% to be reasonably free and fair. The majority of residents of the Center (68%), West (67%), North and Kyiv (62%), and the South (51%) expect the election to be at least reasonably free and fair.
- Ukrainians outside Donbas also tend to have generally positive impressions of the electoral process in Ukraine. Seventy-five percent strongly or somewhat agree that they feel safe voting how they wish, 70% are informed about the electoral process in the country, 68% say elections are competently administered, and 60% at least somewhat agree that election results reflect the way people actually voted.

## Views on Democracy and EuroMaidan

Ukrainians have more positive views on democracy as a system of governance and on Ukrainian democracy in particular in this year's survey when compared to recent IFES surveys in Ukraine. Ukrainians are also much more likely to believe that they can influence decision-making through voting. Despite these more positive views on democracy and citizen engagement, most of those who supported EuroMaidan believe that the current authorities have not lived up to the aspirations of the movement.

- Sixty-four percent of Ukrainians outside Donbas say that democracy is preferable to any other form of government, 13% say that in certain situations a non-democratic system can be preferable, and 11% say the form of government does not matter to them. Preference for democracy is significantly higher among Ukrainians outside Donbas than in the November 2013 IFES survey (38%), the September 2012 survey (48%), and the July 2011 survey (37%). In Donetsk, 36% say democracy is preferable, 16% think a non-democratic government can be preferable in certain situations, and for 26% the form of government does not matter. A clear majority in all age groups prefer democracy as the system of government for Ukraine.
- The percentage of Ukrainians saying that Ukraine is a democracy is at its highest level in the last few years in IFES surveys. In areas outside Donbas, 39% say that Ukraine is a democracy while 28% say it is not and 17% say Ukraine has elements of both a democracy and a non-democracy. This compares to 20% who said Ukraine is a democracy in the 2013 survey in areas outside Donbas, 25% in 2012, and 21% in 2011. In Donetsk, only 15% say that Ukraine is a democracy while 53% say it is not. Even when responses from Donetsk are included in the national

percentage (despite the caution about sampling issues discussed above), 35% say that Ukraine is a democracy, significantly higher than the 25% and 20% who gave this response, respectively, in the 2012 and 2013 IFES surveys.

- When asked to pick up to five statements they associate most with democracy, a majority picks protecting human rights (59%), followed by consistent enforcement of the law (53%), and no official corruption (48%). These responses are similar to responses in previous IFES surveys in Ukraine. There have been some slight shifts in the percentage saying democracy means that everyone has work (down from 41% to 31%), and in the percentage mentioning freedom of speech (up from 39% to 43%). Other meanings ascribed to democracy include a system of checks and balances between different branches of the government (up from 18% to 25%), the freedom to vote (27%), state support of pensioners (22%), state support of those unable to work (16%), and freedom of the press (20%).
- There is a far greater sense of citizen influence on government decision-making in this year's survey than in IFES surveys over the past decade in Ukraine. In this survey, 52% of Ukrainians outside Donbas strongly or somewhat agree that voting gives them influence over decision-making in Ukraine. This is far higher than the 33% who expressed this opinion in the November 2013 survey in areas outside Donbas and is the highest level recorded since the February 2005 survey. In this survey, 41% disagree that voting gives them influence. As would be expected, opinions on this issue are considerably different in Donetsk. In Donetsk, only 19% agree and 76% disagree. If the Donetsk data is added to data for Ukrainians outside Donbas, the percentage who agree nationally drops to 46%, still a significantly higher percentage than in previous surveys.
- Support for the Maidan has a strong impact on views on whether voting gives one influence. Among those who report supporting EuroMaidan, 64% agree that voting gives them influence while 30% disagree. Among those who report opposing EuroMaidan, 26% agree and 68% disagree. As far as support for EuroMaidan is concerned, 53% of Ukrainians outside Donbas report having supported the movement and 29% report having opposed it, and 18% don't offer an opinion. Among those who report supporting EuroMaidan, only 21% think that the current authorities have addressed the aspirations of EuroMaidan and 66% say it has not.
- Among reasons given for the view that the government has addressed the aspirations of the Maidan movement include that the government listened to the voice of the Maidan (52%), elections for a new President were held (12%), and the government has committed to the EU (10%). Among reasons given for not meeting aspirations is the lack of lustration and personnel changes (60%), the focus on the war (6%), and a general view that the government has not done anything of note (6%).

## Ukraine's Foreign Relations

There is greater support for Ukraine having closer relations with Europe than Russia in all regions of the country outside Donbas. Ukrainians outside of Donbas have very negative perceptions of Russia, and a slight majority of those outside Donbas now support Ukraine joining NATO.

- The majority of Ukrainians outside Donbas continue to prefer closer relations with Europe (59%) than with Russia (8%). A further 16% say Ukraine would be better off having good relations with both Europe and Russia. Only 9% of Ukrainians outside of Donbas say that Ukraine would be better off having relations with neither. Attitudes differed greatly in Donbas, where only 19% say Ukraine would be better off with closer ties to Europe compared to 31% saying Ukraine would be better off with ties to Russia. The most popular option in Donbas, however, is good relations with



both Europe and Russia, which is supported by 35% of the population. Only 5% in Donbas think that Ukraine would be better off with relations with neither Russia nor Europe. There are varying levels of support for relations with Europe and Russia in different regions of the country. In the West, 84% prefer closer relations with Europe and this percentage is 71% in the North and Kyiv. In the Center, 50% support closer relations with Europe but 19% also say Ukraine should have good relations with both Europe and Russia. In the South, 32% prefer Europe, 25% good relations with both, 19% relations with neither, and 13% prefer Russia. In Eastern oblasts outside Donbas, 37% prefer closer relations with Europe compared to 19% for Russia and 26% who prefer closer relations with both.

- Attitudes towards various foreign governments and entities vary greatly between Ukrainians outside of Donbas and Ukrainians in Donbas. Outside of Donbas, 70% of Ukrainians say they have either a very positive (34%) or somewhat positive (36%) view on the leadership of the European Union (EU). In Donbas only 23% of residents have a very positive (1%) or somewhat positive (22%) view of the EU.
- A majority of Ukrainians outside Donbas also have either a very positive (18%) or somewhat positive (34%) of the United States, compared to only 20% having a negative view and 18% who say their view is neither positive or negative. Views of the United States are far less positive in Donbas, where only 3% of residents have a somewhat positive view of the United States, compared to 72% holding a negative opinion.
- A plurality of Ukrainians outside of Donbas (50%) likewise hold either a very positive (21%) or somewhat positive (29%) view of the leadership of NATO. As with the United States, residents of Donbas have a very unfavorable view of NATO, with only 2% holding a positive view, compared to 63% holding a negative view.
- Germany's leadership is viewed positively by just under half of Ukrainians outside of Donbas, with 15% having a very positive view of leadership and 34% having a somewhat positive view. Within Donbas, Germany's leadership remains unpopular, with only 15% expressing either a very (1%) or somewhat positive view (13%).
- The least popular foreign government outside of Donbas is the Russian government, of which only a small minority of Ukrainians have either a very positive (3%) or somewhat positive (9%) opinion. Furthermore, outside of Donbas 58% of Ukrainians have a very negative opinion of the Russian government. Within Donbas, however, the Russian government is viewed positively, with 25% having a very positive view and 43% having a somewhat positive view of the Russian government.
- The differing attitudes towards the Russian government inside and outside of Donbas is reflected in other attitudes held by Ukrainians. In Donbas, 54% say that Russia treats Ukraine with respect, compared to only 8% in Ukraine outside of Donbas. Similarly, while 43% of Ukrainians in Donbas agree that Russia promotes democracy in Ukraine, outside of Donbas only 5% of Ukrainians agree with this statement. Furthermore, within Donbas, 52% of Ukrainians say that Russia has a culture and values that Ukraine should aspire to, compared to only 12% of Ukrainians outside of Donbas. While many within Donbas say that Ukraine should aspire to emulate Russian values and culture, only 16% of Ukrainians in Donbas say that Russia tries to impose its culture on other countries, compared to 68% of Ukrainians outside of Donbas. Finally, outside of Donbas, 84% of Ukrainians agree that Russia interferes in the affairs of other nations for its own economic benefit, compared to only 40% within Donbas.
- Slightly more Ukrainians outside of Donbas support joining NATO compared to the number who have a positive opinion of NATO. Fifty-two percent of Ukrainians outside of Donbas either strongly support or somewhat support Ukraine joining NATO, compared to 27% who oppose joining NATO. Of Ukrainians outside of Donbas who have a very positive view of NATO, 76%

strongly support Ukraine joining NATO. In Donbas, support for joining NATO is very limited, with only 19% of Ukrainians there supporting Ukraine in joining NATO.

## Views on Conflict in the East

A significant percentage of Ukrainians believe that the Poroshenko administration has utilized too little force in the conflict in the East. However, more Ukrainians than not also prefer a negotiated settlement to the conflict rather than a military resolution. Most Ukrainians do not believe that separatist groups in Donbas represent the majority of the population in their regions, and most residents of oblasts in Eastern and Southern Ukraine prefer to keep their oblast part of Ukraine.

- More Ukrainians than not outside of Donbas believe that the Poroshenko administration is using too little force in Donetsk and Luhansk. Overall, 44% say the administration is using too little force, 10% say it is using the appropriate force, and 15% say it is using too much force. Thirty-one percent do not give an opinion. In every region of the county outside Donbas, more Ukrainians say that too little force is being used rather than too much. In Donbas, 30% say that the administration is using too much force, 10% say appropriate force and 19% say it is using too little force. Thirty-three percent do not give a response.
- While Ukrainians outside Donbas believe that too little force has been used in the conflict in the East, they are split on whether a negotiated settlement or a military solution to the conflict should be utilized to resolve it. Given four options, four in ten prefer a negotiated settlement (30% negotiations with Russia, 11% negotiations with the separatists), and about an equal percentage prefer a military solution (29% continued military action but with caution to minimize civilian casualties, 11% full-scale military action). Respondents in the West, North (including Kyiv) and Center are more likely to prefer a military solution, while respondents in the South and East outside of Donbas are much more likely to prefer a negotiated settlement. In Donbas, a majority prefers a negotiated settlement, with 33% preferring negotiations with Russia and 26% negotiations with the separatists.
- It is interesting that those who prefer a negotiated settlement are more likely to say that these negotiations have to take place with Russia rather than with separatists. One reason for this may be the fact that more Ukrainians than not, both inside and outside Donbas, do not believe that the separatists represent the majority of the population of Donbas. In Donbas, 16% believe that the separatists represent the majority in Donbas, while 23% believe they represent a significant percentage but not a majority, and 42% say that separatists only represent a small minority of the population in Donbas. Outside Donbas, a majority of Ukrainians (57%) say that the separatists only represent a minority, and 6% say they represent a majority of the population in Donbas.
- Residents of oblasts in the East and South (with the exception of Luhansk) were given four options for the oblasts' relationship with Ukraine, and asked to state their preference. In all regions except Donetsk, the vast majority of respondents would like to keep the oblast within Ukraine, but in most of these cases they would prefer greater powers for the oblast. Very few prefer that their oblast be independent or a part of Russia. In Donetsk, 49% prefer remaining a part of Ukraine (37% with greater powers for the oblast, and 12% with the current arrangement) and 31% prefer separating from Ukraine (17% joining Russia, 14% becoming independent).



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