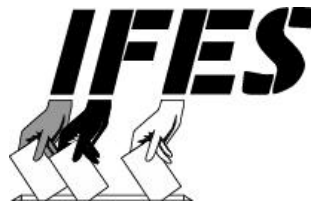


# Public Opinion In Belarus 1999

A Publication in the  
*VOICES OF THE ELECTORATE*  
Series

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**November 1999**

Prepared for



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In Belarus  
1999**

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This Publication was made possible through support provided by the Office of Democracy and Governance, Bureau for Europe and the New Independent States, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), under the terms of Cooperative Agreement No. EE-A-00-97-00034-00. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or IFES.



International Foundation for Election Systems, Washington, DC 20005

*Public Opinion in Belarus: 1999*

Published November 1999  
Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 1-879720-62-0

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## INTRODUCTION

This report analyzes the public opinion environment in Belarus in the spring of 1999, including the public's general views on political and economic development, the performance of the government (national, regional, local), development of elements of civil society, and the perception of Belarus' April 1999 local elections<sup>1</sup>. The Brief Summary provides an overview of the survey data. The Brief Interpretation section describes the data in terms of the transition processes in Belarus and possible implications for foreign assistance in promoting democracy in Belarus.

The presentation of the main survey results is organized thematically and contains the following special sections:

- Economic Environment
- Political Attitudes
- Social Institutions
- Voting
- Perception of April Elections
- Civil Society
- Media

The Appendix includes the complete questionnaire and a table of the data.

The 1999 survey is the first such survey conducted by the International Foundation for Election Systems in Belarus. From April 28 to May 7, 1999, 1,012 face-to-face interviews of adults (18 years and older) were conducted by a polling firm in Belarus. The technical aspects of this survey, including the sampling and preparation of the final data set, were supervised by Thomas Carson, Ph.D. The questionnaire was created in a joint effort by the IFES staff, including Michael Conway, IFES Senior Program Officer for Europe and NIS; Bob Richey, IFES Program Assistant for Europe and NIS; Thomas Carson, Ph.D.; Larissa Titarenko, Ph.D.; and the polling firm in Belarus. The survey report was written by Larissa Titarenko. The formatted report and tables were provided by Rakesh Sharma, IFES Applied Research Officer. Editorial assistance was provided by Michael Conway, Bob Richey, and IFES interns Sarah Hirschman and John Valentine.

The survey sample was representative of Belarus on the whole, including proportional samples of all six *oblasts* (regions) in Belarus: Miensk, Grodno, Vitebsk, Brest, Gomel, and Mogilev. The sample was also representative of the population by age, gender, ethnicity, place of residence, and region.

All surveys are subject to errors caused by interviewing a sample of persons rather than the entire population. The overall estimated margin of error for a sample of 1,012 persons is 2.8 percent with a 95 percent confidence level. For most questions and in annotated tables, the equation "n=x" signifies the number of respondents per question.

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<sup>1</sup> Reference to institutions and individuals should be taken in their temporal context.

Because this is the first survey of the Belarusian national electorate by IFES, the results of this survey were compared with the results of the IFES Ukrainian national survey conducted in June 1999 by Gary Ferguson. Also, some results have been compared with surveys conducted in Russia, which were provided by the United States Information Agency. Such comparisons help put the Belarusian experience in context with the experiences of other countries of the New Independent States (NIS).

This survey report:

- gives a general sense of public opinion toward the political and economic situation in Belarus;
- provides a description of the political environment in Belarus;
- examines views toward the current state of affairs of the economy and toward the future;
- examines public perception of the April 1999 local elections;
- examines voting patterns;
- assesses the outlook for political participation;
- profiles the level of public information on economic and political issues;
- provides an assessment of the mass media's role in Belarus; and
- provides a report on the methodology used in sampling and interviewing respondents during the field work.

While the Belarus survey, unlike IFES' surveys in Ukraine, did not reveal sharp differences of opinion along ethnic or geographic lines (the Ukraine surveys have consistently revealed a sharp East-West cleavage in public opinion on many issues), the survey did reveal a difference of attitudes between the residents of Minsk, the capital, and the rest of the country. Because of the striking differences on such topics as economic and political reforms, much of the analysis compares the data gathered in the capital to that gathered from the countryside. The comparison between this survey and the Ukrainian survey yielded some interesting results. The entire set of Ukrainian data is from an IFES survey entitled "Public Opinion in Ukraine 1999."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ferguson, Gary, *Public Opinion in Ukraine 1999*, IFES, Washington, DC, 1999



## SUMMARY

### The Economic Situation has Deteriorated

- Two-thirds of Belarusians are dissatisfied with the situation in the country today.
- Those who are satisfied with the situation tend to live in villages and small towns and to be over 65 years of age.
- A majority of those who are dissatisfied (57 percent) cite economic problems as the source of their dissatisfaction.
- More people believe that the economic situation will get worse rather than improve in the coming year (37 percent versus 19 percent); a quarter of the respondents predict it will remain the same.
- More people believe that their personal financial situation will worsen rather than improve in the coming year (35 percent versus 15 percent), and 28 percent of the population predicts it will be the same.
- Nearly three fourths of respondents (74 percent) report that they do not have any savings, while 25 percent consider themselves poor;
- More people say that a planned economy is better than a market economy (41 percent to 23 percent); 19 percent have no preference.
- Only 10 percent say they are owed back wages (all of them for less than six months).

### President Lukashenko is Still the Most Popular Political Leader<sup>3</sup>

- Four in ten say that President Alexander Lukashenko is the figure most likely to resolve the economic problems Belarus is facing next year.
- More than half (56 percent) say they intend to vote for Lukashenko in the 2001 presidential elections, while 26 percent say they will not.
- More than half (53 percent) are aware of the “illegal” May 1999 presidential elections, but only 20 percent approve of them.
- More people trust Lukashenko than trust the government, and many believe that the government is corrupt.
- More than two-thirds (68 percent) do not believe that the government works in the interests of all the people.
- Two in three support the Lukashenko-backed Belarus-Russia union, and 24 percent do not support it.

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<sup>3</sup> The evaluation of Lukashenko is similar to that found in a survey conducted in Belarus by the United States Information Agency (USIA) between May 1 and May 27, 1999, which also finds that Lukashenko enjoys solid support. Forty percent express a fair amount of confidence, and 23 percent express a great deal of confidence in him; one third voices little (19 percent) or no (14 percent) confidence in him. These findings are similar to those of a 1997 USIA survey in which 61 percent expressed confidence in Lukashenko, and 33 percent did not.

## **Despite Their Support for Lukashenko, Many Favor Democratic Practices**

- More than half (58 percent) say at least two parties are necessary in Belarus.
- Nine in ten say it is important to them that rights of private property, freedom of religion, and honest elections be respected in Belarus.
- Three-quarters say the protection of private property is one of a citizen's most important rights.
- Nearly half (46 percent) say NGOs are important for Belarusian society.
- Three quarters say they will vote in the 2001 presidential elections.
- People in the Miensk and Brest regions are more open to democracy and a free market than are people in other regions.

## **Broad Participation in the Elections**

- A majority says honest elections are very important.
- Seven in ten participated in the April 1999 local elections; of these, 46 percent say these elections were generally honest (37 percent gave no response).
- Nearly half (46 percent) say that they had confidence in the election officials; 31 percent gave no answer.
- Fewer than one in three (28 percent) say "voting is their civic duty."
- Of those who voted in April, 60 percent say the elections were well-organized.
- Nine in ten say there were no problems during the April elections.
- More than 50 percent say they had at least some information about the voting process; 33 percent did not have any information.

## **Corruption is a Major Concern**

- Three in four say corruption is common (37 percent say it is very common), and 68 percent consider it serious.
- Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) regard the police as the most corrupt institution in Belarus.
- The church is seen as less corrupt (12 percent) than other institutions and is the institution in which the greatest number of respondents (72 percent) expressed the most confidence.
- The three institutions most often reported to be corrupt are the police, local administrations, and the courts.
- The three most trusted institutions are the church, the army, and the State Security Service.

## **Political Interests: Alienated From Process**

- More than half (56 percent) are interested in political matters (16 percent are very interested).

- More than three-quarters (76 percent) say people have no influence on what is going on in Belarus.
- Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) say politics is too complicated to be understood.

### **Media: Russian Television is More Popular and Considered More Objective than Belarus Television**

- More than half of all Belarusians say they did not have enough information about politics, economic events, the voting process, and candidates in the April 1999 elections.
- The most widely known and chief source of information on politics and government is ORT (Public Russian Television) (98 percent and 83 percent, respectively). Belarus TV is the second most known and consulted source.
- ORT is rated to be the most objective source of information while Belarus TV is considered more biased than the Russian television stations ORT, NTV, and RTR; many deem Belarus TV an unreliable source of information.
- Belarus radio is the most frequently listened to radio station in Belarus. Two-thirds of the respondents report listening to Belarus radio, and its objectivity is considered to be much higher than that of Belarus TV or any Belarusian newspaper.
- Although *Sovetskaya Belorussia* is the most known newspaper among Belarusians (almost 70 percent of all respondents mentioned this newspaper as their main source of information), more Belarusians consider *Argumenty i F акты* more objective than *Sovetskaya Belorussia*.
- Overall, Belarusians deem Russian sources of mass information to be more reliable than Belarus TV and newspapers.
- A small number of Belarusians (fewer than one in five) knows of Radio Liberty, Voice of America, or the BBC; however, among the listeners, more people say these sources are objective than say that they are not objective.

### **General Findings**

- Almost a third of respondents (29 percent) say Belarus is a democracy, 26 percent say it is not, and 21 percent say it is neither.
- Age, education, and locality are significant factors affecting public opinion in Belarus. Social and economic status are less significant, and ethnicity is not a significant factor affecting public opinion.
- Almost one-third (28 percent) say Belarus is isolated, 19 percent say Belarus is partially isolated from the world community, and 41 percent agree that isolation creates problems for Belarus.

### **Regional Differences**

- There are no significant differences between the opinions expressed by residents of Eastern and Western Belarus.
- The most conservative region is Mogilev, while the most reform-oriented region is Miensk city.
- People in the Miensk and Brest regions express more support for democracy and free-market reform than do people in other regions.

## INTERPRETATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The findings of the IFES survey provide a snapshot of Belarus in May 1999. Although no single survey can give a statistical picture of all aspects of Belarusian public opinion, this survey helps to explain some of the most important factors influencing public opinion in Belarus.

The Republic of Belarus became an independent state with the collapse of the Soviet Union in August 1991. Prior to the dissolution of the USSR, Belarus was one of the most heavily Sovietized republics. In Belarus many of the Soviet *nomenklatura* retained their positions after 1991, contrary to the hopes of some reformers. These elites have continued to use Soviet-style decision-making and management techniques and have proven to be strongly opposed to economic and political reforms. The leadership of this highly conservative and deeply entrenched *nomenklatura*, together with other factors, resulted in a slow pace of reform in Belarus. Compared with Russia or Ukraine, Belarus is far behind in making the transition to a free-market economy and democratic society. Moreover, the Soviet era mentality and lifestyle are still typical for the population, especially for the elderly (as is the case in other Soviet republics, including Ukraine and Russia). The presidential elections in 1994 that brought Alexander Lukashenko, a pro-socialist authoritarian populist leader to office, also ushered in a conservatism that slowed the pace of reforms. As some Belarusian analysts have noted, President Lukashenko has turned the country back to the Soviet past rather than forward<sup>4</sup>.

Nevertheless, the survey data demonstrate that even with President Lukashenko in office, Belarusian society is still moving toward reform. Belarus is in the process of making a slow post-communist transition. Since 1991, many important changes have occurred: the relaxation of restrictions on the press (as compared with the Soviet era), the formation of political parties and nongovernmental organizations, and the promulgation of legislation allowing for the ownership of private property and the right to work in the private sector. Because of these democratic changes, a significant (but not a decisive) part of the public now thinks that a democratic political system and free-market economy should be the model for Belarus' future.

While the pace of reforms in Belarus lags far behind the pace of change in Belarus' neighboring states (Ukraine, Poland, Russia, and the Baltic states), it is important to bear in mind that it has been only eight years since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the political sphere and in the mentality of some demographic groups, a positive shift has occurred, as can be seen in the survey data:

- Private property exists and there is moderate (but substantial) support for a free market economy among the population.
- Belarusians have a deep understanding of the meaning of democracy as a political regime and of the need for liberal freedoms for all, rather than as a system of economic benefits.
- The majority supports human rights and select freedoms.
- There is limited but substantial support for nongovernmental organizations.
- Belarusians support the development of a multiparty system in Belarus.

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<sup>4</sup> Potupa, Alexander, "Belarus - XXI: Scenarios of Evolution," in *Narodnaya Volya*, June 5, 1999.

- There is support for a free press (either Belarusian or Russian).

Given the economic and political realities in Belarus, it is not realistic to expect that democracy and a free market will take root in the immediate future. There are, however, groups within Belarusian society that are supportive of democratic and market reforms despite the August 1998 financial crisis in Russia, which discredited both the terms “democracy” and “free market” for many citizens of the former Soviet Union. The survey data prove that younger people with at least some university education are more open to democratic changes than are other groups of the population. As is common within comparable societies in transition, the younger the respondent, the more likely he or she was to be supportive of democratic and economic reforms. The age group most supportive of such reforms is the 25-44 year olds. Also, those who live in an urban environment are more oriented to democracy and a free market than are those from the countryside. However, older respondents, even those with a university education, are less open to reforms and more supportive of a state-regulated economy.

The survey results suggest that both the West and Russia have strong influences on the course of transition in Belarus. Although two-thirds of respondents support a Russia-Belarus union, there is still strong evidence to suggest that they are not in favor of Belarus completely relinquishing its sovereignty to Russia. The support by many Belarusians of closer ties with the Russian Federation could be interpreted as a tacit acknowledgement of Belarus’s economic and historical ties with Russia, as well as its geographic proximity. However, many Belarusians express concern that Belarus is becoming too isolated from the international community and think this isolation creates problems for Belarus. If the political environment could be changed for the better, many respondents said they would welcome closer links with the West. In the current political environment, respondents say, such changes seem unlikely for the following reasons:

- President Lukashenko, who has been a strong supporter of a Belarus-Russia union, and who historically has been distrustful of Western influence in Belarus, is still the most popular political figure. More people plan to vote for him in the 2001 presidential elections than plan to vote against him.
- Political parties have little popular support. People more often vote for independent candidates who are not affiliated with a political party than for candidates who are. The political opposition does not have popular support. Only one in five Belarusians supported the May 1999 presidential elections organized by the opposition. At this time, no political figure has emerged who is a viable challenger to President Lukashenko.
- There are limited possibilities for the operation of a free press and opposition activism, including nongovernmental organizations and partisan activities.
- Finally, international organizations and media outlets (at both the official and the grass roots level), have limited access to the citizenry of Belarus, and thus little chance to influence public opinion. The public is largely unaware of these organizations and media. The majority of Belarusians receive their information from Russian media sources, which have recently been highly critical of the West.

Economic factors play a major role in shaping public opinion. Currently, Belarus is mired in a financial crisis, brought on, in part, by Russia’s near economic collapse in 1998. The majority of

Belarusians are dissatisfied with conditions in Belarus, especially with declining living conditions, high inflation, and low wages. More than half of the survey respondents are pessimistic about the likelihood that the economic situation will improve in the next year. President Lukashenko's popularity would appear to be contingent upon his ability to abate the decline in living conditions, as he has clearly aligned himself and his policies with constituencies favoring strong government control over the economic life of Belarus (and, consequently, with strong government control over all aspects of society). If the Belarusian public could be convinced that they would fare better under a free-market economy, rather than under a command economy, it is likely that they would reevaluate President Lukashenko's rule. However, at this time it is important to understand that, while dissatisfied with the current situation, people have so far successfully adapted to the existing economic reality. Under such circumstances, change may mean having to adapt to newer and, more likely, temporarily more difficult conditions. In this context, it is easy to see why a majority may be unwilling to advocate any significant change in current conditions.

In addition to suffering from an economic crisis, Belarus is also suffering from a political crisis. Many people do not trust the government, Parliament, political parties, courts, or national and commercial banks. The majority does not believe that they can influence decision making by voting or being active in political matters. This negative attitude has resulted in a lack of political interest and a sense of alienation from political life for a significant part of the population. Young people between the ages of 18 and 24 are most likely to report feeling disaffected by the political process. Belarusians over age 55 are those most likely to participate in elections, are more likely to support President Lukashenko, and are more satisfied with the current state of affairs than any other age group. In short, the element of Belarusian society most likely to support economic and political reforms is also the group least likely to participate in the political process at this time.

Gender is not a significant factor in the shaping of public opinion, but women are less likely to be involved in political and economic affairs than are men. This tendency increases with age. Women living in the country are more conservative and less likely to express an interest in politics than are women living in urban centers. Overall, women are less committed either to reforms or to the status quo than men are (when all other factors are similar). While the population of Belarus is split by political preferences (a substantial portion of the population does not support market reforms, a smaller portion supports reforms, and more than a third of the population is alienated and unsure of which course is better), there are no significant differences in opinion along ethnic lines. Age and geography are the two most important factors in determining support for or opposition to political and economic reforms. There is little prospect for garnering support for reforms in the countryside, or among Belarus' older population.

Education is another deciding factor. Respondents with at least some university education are more likely to support reforms. People with only a secondary-school education are less likely to support reforms, while those with less than a secondary school education are the least likely to support reforms. This suggests that one approach to promoting market initiatives and civic development is by increasing support to universities and educators. Assuming that teachers in

both secondary and post-secondary institutions have high levels of education themselves, one can therefore suppose that many educators are supportive of democratic reforms. With this in mind, educators may be well-suited to give young people positive impressions of democracy and the free market. Yet many teachers are unable to fulfill this role, as they can afford neither adequate staff support nor current scholarly literature; many of them earn just enough to provide for their most basic needs.

The residents of Miensk city disagree with the rest of the country on virtually every issue. Miensk is the center of support for democratic reforms in Belarus. The major factor distinguishing the residents of Miensk from the rest of Belarus' residents is the level of education they have attained. Respondents from Miensk are more likely to have studied at a university than are respondents from outside Miensk. As in many other societies, students from the hinterland will attempt to remain in any large population center upon completion of their studies, resulting in a higher per capita education level in cities. In addition, residents of the cities hosting institutions of higher education will also have an advantage in receiving a higher education.

In general, the average income level of Miensk city residents is comparable to the average income level in other parts of Belarus, and respondents from Miensk were as likely to favor a state-controlled economy as were respondents from outside of Miensk. Miensk residents are more likely to favor some economic and political reforms than are residents from any other part of Belarus. Expectations for foreign assistance are likely to be higher in Miensk than in any other region.

IFES is concerned about the relatively low level of public awareness among Belarusians about their political and economic situation, and their place in an international community. A free flow of information and engaged social discourse is necessary for the vitality of any country or system. This is not evident today in Belarus. In our survey, respondents repeatedly told us that they did not know or had no opinion about key issues in their lives.

Sizable proportions of the population stated that they did not know which institution could fix their economic problems, whether Belarus was isolated from the international community, whether their government acts in the best interests of its citizens, or whether the local Soviets are effective. Many also stated they did not know if corruption is frequent, whether voting influences decision-making, if Belarus is a democracy, what democracy means to them, the necessity of political parties and differences between them, the importance of multi-party elections, or even what will be the most important issues to them in choosing a candidate for president in 2001. Higher proportions state they do not know if the April elections were honest, the party affiliation of the candidate they voted for, how well the candidates reflect the views of the voters, or whether the military are compelled to vote. In this context, it is not surprising that nearly half of the respondents were "not aware" of the recent elections organized by the opposition.

This lack of knowledge and awareness comes from many sources. Over half of our respondents directly told us that they were not well informed about political events, economic affairs and



the candidates they had to choose from. This is confirmed in our data. State control of media including actions that directly limit the effectiveness of non-state sources of information are important factors here. The sources of this lack of knowledge go deeper than this.

In general, our results show that respondents in Brest and Vitebsk are less likely to answer sensitive questions, or say they do not know. Those in Gomel and Grodno are more likely. Respondents from Miensk can go either way on sensitive issues, but many did not want to give their opinion concerning the honesty of the April 1999 elections.

Ethnicity has a clear effect on the willingness to answer questions. Those who self-identify as both Belarusian and Russian are often unwilling to give their opinions. Self-proclaimed Belarusians are more willing, and Russians the most willing of these three groups. This pattern is reversed for two sensitive questions: the effect of the military voting and government acts for all. For these questions, Russians were the least likely to answer of the three ethnic groups.

Generally, the higher the socioeconomic status (SES), the more willing to give opinions. However, the highest and lowest SES groups were similar in their reluctance to give concrete answers to questions concerning political parties and issues that will motivate them to vote. We expect that different factors produce these results. This same pattern is observed as we move from the villages toward Oblast centers and Miensk.

The percentage of non-substantial answers also increases with age, except that the youngest also are reluctant to answer questions regarding their choice of political party. The young do not vote, did not vote in the past, or are not committed to the election process and candidates.

From this analysis, we can conclude that lack of information does affect many of the respondents, particularly those with lower levels of education. However, many capable respondents seem to withhold their opinions on some of the more sensitive questions. This finding may affect the findings reported in this report.

## THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT IN BELARUS

### Evaluation of the General Situation

As is the case in other republics of the former Soviet Union, Belarus is suffering from an economic crisis. It is estimated that the standard of living is four to five times lower than in Russia and roughly comparable to the standard of living in Ukraine. A Soviet-style planned economy still prevails. According to official data, the state owns all but 20 percent of industry and businesses (private industry is mostly limited to the service and trade sectors). The majority of the population reports having difficulty making ends meet; the average monthly salary is approximately \$25-\$30. In such an environment, it is to be expected that the average resident of Belarus is primarily concerned with providing the basic necessities for his or her household. It comes as no surprise that the majority of respondents report being dissatisfied with the current state of the economy in Belarus and are also pessimistic about the prospect for economic improvement in the coming year.

Figure 1 shows how respondents rate their level of satisfaction with the current state of affairs in Belarus. It is interesting to note that while the majority report being dissatisfied, a higher percentage of Belarusians reported being somewhat or very satisfied than did Ukrainians when asked the same question in 1999.

**Figure 1. Satisfaction with Situation in Belarus<sup>5</sup>**

	<b>Belarus, 1999 (n=1012)</b>	<b>Ukraine, 1999 (n=1200)</b>
Very satisfied	5%	0%
Fairly satisfied	21%	2%
Somewhat dissatisfied	40%	29%
Very dissatisfied	27%	65%
Don't know	6%	2%
Refused/NA	1%	-
	100%	98%

Those who are very satisfied with the situation represent a group with specific characteristics. Among them, 60 percent are over the age of 65, 38 percent assess themselves as being of a moderate income level, and 33 percent are in the lower-than-moderate income bracket; 50 percent live in villages or small towns. Among those who report being fairly satisfied, 28 percent are older than 65. In addition, more women than men report being fairly satisfied. Unlike the group reporting that they are very satisfied (those who reside mostly in villages or small towns), the members of the group reporting that they are fairly satisfied are almost as likely to come from the city as from a village.

A close relationship exists between the age of the respondent and his or her level of satisfaction with the current situation. Thus, among the group of respondents aged 18-24, 18

<sup>5</sup> Are you generally satisfied or dissatisfied with the situation in Belarus, at this time –would you say you are very satisfied, fairly satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?

percent are satisfied with the situation. Among 25-29 year-olds, 16 percent report being satisfied. Among 30-39 year-olds, the level of satisfaction is also 16 percent. Given the statistical error of approximately 3 percent, all three groups are roughly equal in their level of satisfaction with the current situation in Belarus. For people between the ages of 40 and 49, the level of satisfaction is close to the average (22 percent). For respondents older than 49, the level of satisfaction steadily increases with age: 30 percent among 50-59 year-olds, 42 percent among those age 60-64, and 44 percent among people over age 65.

At the same time, the level of dissatisfaction is almost the same for the first four age groups (74 percent for 18-24, 77 percent for 25-29 and 30-39, and 74 percent for 40-49). Within the older groups, the level of dissatisfaction steadily decreases with age: 66 percent for people 50-59, 50 percent for those 60-64, and 47 percent for people over 65.

Among those who are very dissatisfied with the situation, 35 percent are between the ages of 18-34, and 28 percent are ages 35-44. Very few seniors report being very dissatisfied with the situation. People who report being very dissatisfied are more likely to have moderate (48 percent) or high-income levels. More specifically, almost 88 percent of those who have a high level of income say they are not satisfied with the situation. It is interesting to note that one-third of those who are very dissatisfied live in villages, while 23 percent live in Minsk and 34 percent live in large cities or *oblast* cities.

Ethnicity is not a significant factor regarding the overall satisfaction with the current situation. There is, however, a clear tendency for those with higher levels of education to feel less satisfied. Thus, among people with primary and some secondary education, 38 percent are satisfied, and 52 percent are not. Among people with a complete secondary education, only 24 percent are satisfied and 70 percent are not. For those with some university education, the proportion is 13 percent satisfied to 79 percent dissatisfied, and among those with university degrees the ratio is 19 percent satisfied to 77 percent dissatisfied.

While fewer Belarusians report being dissatisfied than satisfied with the current state of affairs, a larger percentage of them report being satisfied than did Ukrainians in 1999. One possible explanation for the difference in levels of satisfaction might be the issue of back wages. Only 10 percent of Belarusians report being owed back wages, with none owed more than six months' worth of wages. By contrast, it is not uncommon for workers in Russia and Ukraine to be owed back wages for several months, or even years. According to a recent USIA survey, more Russians cited wage nonpayment and delays as the single most serious problem facing Russia today<sup>6</sup>. Unlike in Russia or Ukraine, where many people receive material goods in lieu of their salary or wages, in Belarus, only 3 percent report receiving goods instead of pay. The subject of wage arrears receives extensive coverage on Russian television, which is viewed in many Belarusian households. As a result, Belarusians may be assessing their situation favorably as compared to the situation in Russia and Ukraine.

Those who report being satisfied are more likely to support the current regime. Among those who reported being very satisfied, 84 percent are strong supporters of President Lukashenko,

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<sup>6</sup> *Who is to Blame? Pointing Fingers for Russia's Wage Arrears Crisis*, USIA Opinion Analysis, 1999.

while among those who report being fairly satisfied, 43 percent describe themselves as strong supporters of the president.

Those respondents who report being dissatisfied with the current state of affairs in Belarus most often cite economic woes as the cause of their dissatisfaction.

**Figure 2. Reasons for Dissatisfaction<sup>7</sup>**

	(n=678)
Inflation	33%
Economic trouble (general)	26%
Falling standard of living, impoverishment	19%
Scarcity of goods	4%
Unemployment, jobs	3%
Dissatisfaction with govt. policies	3%
Dissatisfaction with Lukashenko	3%
Civil disorder, lawlessness, corruption	2%
No democracy	2%
Other	3%

For example, 26 percent of respondents who report being dissatisfied cite general economic problems as the reason for their dissatisfaction and 19 percent cite a low standard of living. Also, 33 percent cite inflation. Interestingly, scarcity of goods (4 percent), and unemployment (3 percent) are less frequently cited as a reason for dissatisfaction. Only 6 percent name social and political issues, such as a lack of democracy and concern for the future, as reasons for their dissatisfaction. Clearly, economic issues are at the forefront of Belarusian concerns.

Despite concerns for the state of Belarus's economy, only 5 percent report being unemployed. Retired respondents are more likely to report being satisfied with the situation in Belarus than are employed respondents. President Lukashenko has created an image of himself as a strong leader who has protected Belarus from much of the economic turmoil that has swept through the former Soviet Union. This image of President Lukashenko as the protector of Belarus may play a key role in his popularity. It stands to reason that if wage arrears increase significantly in Belarus, President Lukashenko could be found culpable in the eyes of many Belarusians.

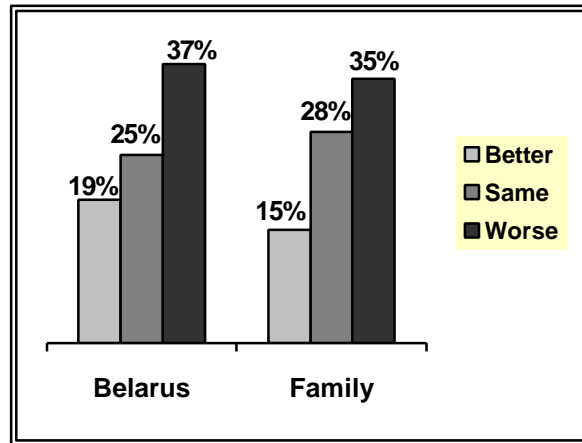
### Evaluation of the Economic Future

Few Belarusians (19 percent) are optimistic about the economic future of Belarus for the coming year. Almost a quarter of respondents think that in a year the economic situation will be the same, and almost 37 percent think it will be worse. Notably, 19 percent of respondents say they are unable to evaluate whether the economic situation in Belarus will be better or worse in a year. Naturally, many respondents find it difficult to predict the future. Russia's

<sup>7</sup> Please tell me some of the reasons why you said you are dissatisfied with the situation in Belarus today?

unforeseen financial crisis last August destroyed many common people's hopes for economic recovery. Keeping the Russians' experience in mind, it is likely that Belarusians do not want to overestimate the Belarusian government's daily reports of positive economic growth. In addition, Belarusians do not see any tangible economic improvements, so more of them evaluate the economic situation as bad rather than good.

**Figure 3. Belarus and Family Economic Situation in One Year<sup>8</sup>**



Expectations for personal finances are similar or even worse. Overall, 15 percent believe their family will be better off than it is one year from now. Many (28 percent) believe their family's situation will be the same as it is now. More than one in three (35 percent) believe their family's financial situation will be worse one year from now.

Respondents' predictions for the future of the national economy seem to be linked to their personal financial situation. The majority of respondents who say that their own financial situation will stay the same or worsen in the coming year also predict the national economy will remain the same or worsen in the coming year.

It is difficult to know exactly what people mean when they say conditions will be "the same." On a personal level, one can guess that they mean the same level of wages or income and as a result, of the continuation of current conditions. As for the country, people could mean that the levels of inflation, unemployment, etc., will stay the same. The survey reveals a close relationship between a respondent's prediction for the future and the respondent's current economic status. For example, 58 percent of those who believe "conditions will be the same" (either for the country or themselves) describe their personal economic situation as 'modest.' Another 20 percent describe themselves as 'poor,' and 2 percent say they are very poor. A majority of the population does not think the economic situation will improve for the country or themselves in the coming year and give a negative assessment of the current economic situation in Belarus.

<sup>8</sup> In your opinion will the economic situation in Belarus (of you and your family living with you) in a year be better than it is now, remain the same, or get worse?

The survey results also reveal that older respondents are more likely to state that the economic situation will be better one year from now. Among 18-24 year olds, 10 percent believe the economic situation will be better in a year, and among 25-34 year olds, 8 percent. Among 35-44 year olds, however, 16 percent believe the economic situation will improve; among 45-54 year olds, the percentage climbs to 21 percent, and among those 55 and older, 29 percent state that the economic situation will be better in a year. In turn, the percentage of those who state that the economic situation will worsen in a year generally declines with age: 39 percent for 18-24 year olds, 49 percent for 25-34 year olds, 44 percent for 35-44 year olds, 37 percent for 45-54 year olds, and 26 percent for those age 55 and older.

Those with high levels of education are also less likely to state that the economic situation will improve in a year. Of those with a primary or some secondary education, 28 percent state that the situation will be better in one year, compared with 18 percent of those with a secondary education. For those with some university education, the percentage drops to 12 percent, and a mere 10 percent of those with a university degree believe the economic situation will improve in a year. Not surprisingly, only 24 percent of respondents with a primary or some secondary education say the situation will be worse in a year, compared with 39 percent of those with a secondary education, 40 percent of those with some university education, and 54 percent of those with a university degree.

Regionally, almost 70 percent of the residents of the Miensk Oblast say the situation will be worse or the same in a year, compared with 54 percent of those in the Brest Oblast and the Mogilev Oblast. Twenty-four percent of the Mogilev Oblast residents say that the situation will be better in a year.

Belarusians demonstrate the same pessimistic tendency when assessing their own financial situation. Though it is important to note that people tend not to be precise in such self-assessments, when asked to describe their own financial status, the respondents classify themselves as follows:

**Figure 4. Household Financial Situation<sup>9</sup>**

	<b>(n=1012)</b>
Very poor, do not have enough money for our most basic needs	6%
Poor, barely have enough money to buy food, rarely buy clothes	19%
Modest, have enough to eat, occasionally buy clothes, but have nothing left over to save	49%
Moderate, have some savings	22%
Above average, have savings and can afford substantial goods and services	1%
N/A	3%
	<b>100%</b>

<sup>9</sup> Which number best describes the current financial situation of you and your family living with you?

Even during minor economic and political changes such as those currently underway in Belarus, it is very important for a majority of the people to support the reforms and feel as if they are better off economically. Yet at least 25 percent of respondents are having a difficult time surviving (they say they are poor or very poor). Another 49 percent are managing with what they do earn, but cannot do much to improve their future circumstances. These self-assessments mirror the attitudes the people hold regarding the economic future of the country.

### Support for a Market Economy

It is very important to understand whether market reforms enjoy support among the population, and which groups in particular support the market economy as well as consider it to be the best model for Belarus' future. When asked about their preferred economic system, on a scale of 1 to 7 (1 being a totally free market economy, and 7 being a state-controlled economy), most respondents prefer an economy somewhat or totally controlled by the state. Figure 5 shows the responses.

**Figure 5. Preferred Economic System<sup>10</sup>**

<b>(n=1012)</b>	
1 - Free Market Economy	6%
2	7%
3	10%
5	11%
6	11%
7 - State Control	19%
Don't Know	15%
Refused/NA	2%
	<b>100%</b>

This presents a clear picture of limited support for a market economy. Further, if one compares strong supporters from both sides of the scale (those who answered 1 or 7), the number of planned economy supporters is three times greater than the number of market economy supporters (6 percent versus 19 percent).

Although 6 percent of those who favor a market economy are "very strong supporters," it is reasonable to look at the group of market economy supporters in general and distinguish between them and the "strong supporters of a planned economy." The first group includes people who support reforms and any steps toward a market economy. This group would most likely support the efforts of international donor organizations, where the second group would regard these efforts with suspicion.

<sup>10</sup> Think about our economic future, how should it develop: free from state control, [ROTATE] under strict control of the state? Now you see the scale where 1 means that the economy must be free from state control, and 7 means that the economy should be under the strict control of the state. Mark on the scale how you think the economy of Belarus should develop.

Once again, it is important to consider the particular demographic differences among respondents and their support for levels of economic control. In general, respondents who are older, female, of a lower income level, or living in rural areas tend to support stricter economic controls more than those who are younger, male, of a higher income level, or living in urban areas.

The two most significant factors are age and education. Thus, support for a market economy decreases as the age of the respondents increases: among 18-24 year olds, 61 percent support (at least to some extent) the market model; among 25-34 year olds, 60 percent; among 35-44 year olds, 50 percent; among 45-54 year olds, 34 percent; and among those 55 and older, 21 percent. Likewise, the percentage of those who support a strictly controlled economy dramatically grows with age: 28 percent among 18-24 year olds, 31 percent among 25-34 year olds, 40 percent among 35-44 year olds, 45 percent among 45-54 year olds, and 72 percent among those 55 and older.

Similar distinctions are apparent when considering respondents' levels of education. Among those with a primary or some secondary education, 31 percent support a controlled economy, compared with 15 percent of those with a secondary education, and 8 percent of those with at least some university education. Similarly, only 7 percent of those with a primary or less than secondary education are strong market supporters, versus 12 percent of those with a secondary education, 15 percent of those with some university education, and 20 percent of those with a university degree.

Those with high levels of education are far more in favor of balanced reform containing a mixture of free markets and limited control. The most liberal-minded appear to be those with some university education: 30 percent gave a response of less than 4 on the scale.

Support for an economy free from state control is more likely to come from people with higher levels of income. For instance, 12 percent of high-income level respondents say they prefer the least amount of control (scale score=1) as compared with 4 percent of respondents of the lowest income level. Conversely, 29 percent of the low-income group prefer the strictest control (scale score=7) as compared with 11 percent of respondents at the high-income level. In terms of employment status, there are more market supporters among students (70 percent), unemployed (69 percent) and partly employed (53 percent) respondents, and much less among those who are fully employed (48 percent), others (43 percent), and pensioners (21 percent).

### **Information about Economic Issues**

Another consideration is the extent that the general population believes they are informed about economic issues. Question 27 asked respondents to gauge their level of economic competence. Thirty-one percent say they are more or less informed (less than 5 percent feel they have a great deal of information), while 61 percent say they are not informed (or poorly



informed). Eight percent did not respond to the question. These responses most likely indicate that the level of economic awareness in Belarus is insufficient to allow people to effectively judge the merits of various economic models or to evaluate current policies relating to economic development.

### Decision Making on Economic Issues

Because of the high concentration of real power in the hands of the President and the executive bodies (the President's administration and government), it was not surprising to find that the majority of respondents feel that the president, or at least the government, should take responsibility for solving the economic problems facing Belarus in the coming year (Q5). These answers show that the population takes into consideration real power instead of theories regarding "balance of power" and alleged equal participation in the decision-making process. Thus, ultimately these results reflect the real distribution of power in Belarus.

**Figure 6. Institution Trusted to Resolve Economic Problems<sup>11</sup>**

	Belarus, 1999 (n=1012)	Ukraine, 1999* (n=1200)
President	40%	26%
*Ukraine - Executive Branch		
Government	17%	NA
National Assembly (Parliament)	3%	19%
Local Administration	2%	11%
Courts	-	3%
Local Soviets	3%	NA
None	15%	18%
Don't Know	20%	22%
Refused/NA	1%	*
	<b>101%<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>99%<sup>a</sup></b>

<sup>a</sup>Rounding error

The comparison with the Ukrainian data is not precise because the 1999 Ukraine survey had only four institutions from which respondents could select: the executive branch; Parliament, or the Supreme Rada; judiciary; and local government, or administration. In the Belarus survey there were six institutions instead of four. Nevertheless, because three of the listed institutions were the same, and a fourth (the executive branch) was more or less similar to the president and the government (which were listed separately in the Belarus survey), one can roughly compare the results. Of course, because of these differences, one cannot discuss the role of the president or the government in Ukraine separately, as they were listed as one entity. However, the differences between the two countries—Ukraine and Belarus—are rather clear:

- The Ukrainian population relies on Parliament to a greater degree than does the Belarusian population; the Ukrainian public has become aware of the role of the Supreme Rada in an

<sup>11</sup> Thinking of the President, the government, the National Assembly, local Soviets, local administration, and the courts, which of these, in your opinion, is the most likely to resolve the economic problems facing Belarus in the next year?

emerging democracy, while in Belarus, the population is aware of the National Assembly's lack of power.

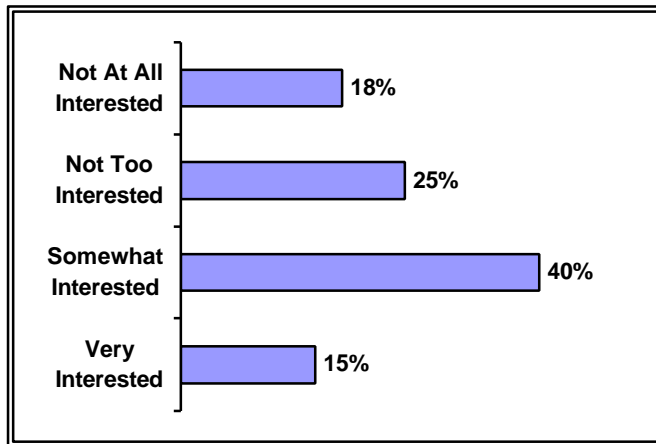
- The Ukrainian population relies on the local administration much more than the Belarusian population.
- The Ukrainian population relies on the courts and judiciary somewhat more than the Belarusian population.
- It is also obvious that in the eyes of the public, the Ukrainian Parliament plays a much more important role than the Belarusian Parliament (19 percent versus 3 percent). This means that the population is aware that the systems of decision-making (both in the economic sphere and in the political sphere) in Ukraine and Belarus differ greatly, even if the economic outcomes are not tremendously different (both countries are stagnating and the standard of living is rather low).

Additional notes: age and education levels are responsible for some differences in opinion concerning who will resolve economic problems. For instance, in Belarus:

- the oldest generation, those 65 and older, look mostly to President Lukashenko for the resolution of economic problems (28 percent), compared with a mere 7 percent of 25-29 year olds;
- the middle-aged groups, ages 30-39 and 40-49, feel the most strongly that the government will resolve the nation's problems (21 percent and 27 percent), and also demonstrate above average levels of pessimism— 23 percent and 30 percent feel that no level or branch of government will be able to resolve the current situation;
- more than half (53 percent) of those who say that the President will resolve the economic situation have only a primary and/or some secondary schooling. (Interestingly, those with the highest levels of education were clearly divided between a belief in the president's ability to resolve the situation and the feeling that no level or branch of government will be able to resolve the current economic crisis.)

## GENERAL POLITICAL ATTITUDES

Figure 7. Interest in Politics<sup>12</sup>



In the current post-Soviet era, the population's interest in politics has decreased; this is typical for all republics of the former Soviet Union (FSU). During the Soviet era, the official sociological data usually indicated very high general interest in politics. During the 1990s, this indicator fell dramatically among FSU countries, including Belarus. In the IFES survey, only 15 percent say they are very interested in political issues, and 40 percent are somewhat interested. At the same time, 25 percent are not too interested and 18

percent are not interested in politics at all. In general, this indicates that more than half of the population is interested in political matters, versus 43 percent who are not interested. Of those who did not vote in the April 1999 elections, 49 percent say they are interested in political matters, and 49 percent say they are not. Very few people refuse to indicate their level of interest in politics.

If we compare this data with that of Ukraine, where 43 percent of the population said they were interested and 56 percent said they were not interested in political matters in 1999, we conclude that Belarusians are more interested in politics. While this difference is not very significant, it is important to consider the differences between those who are interested and those who are completely disinterested in political issues in Belarus. Respondents interested in politics tend to be between 30 and 59 years old, male (more women than men are disinterested in politics, 61 percent compared with 39 percent, respectively), of a moderate income level, and hold at least some university education.

Age is a significant factor. Among 18-29 year olds, 49 percent are interested in political matters and 49 percent are not. Among 30-39 year olds the proportion is 59 percent to 41 percent, respectively; among 40-49 year olds the proportion is 59 percent to 39 percent; among 50-59 year olds, 62 percent to 36 percent; among 60-64 year olds, 55 percent to 42 percent; and among those over 65, 52 percent to 43 percent.

There is a strong connection between a high level of interest in politics and a high level of education. For instance, among the respondents with primary and some secondary education, 41 percent are interested in politics while 53 percent are not. Among the respondents with a complete secondary education, those interested in politics constitute 55 percent of respondents, while 44 percent are not interested. This trend continues as the level of

<sup>12</sup> How interested are you in matters of politics-- are you very interested, somewhat interested, not too interested, or not at all interested? (n=1012)

education increases: for those with some university education the ratio is 65 percent interested to 34 percent disinterested, while those with a university degree have a ratio of 74 percent interested to 25 percent disinterested.

It is also important to note that more people are interested in political matters than feel satisfied with their level of awareness about those matters. When asked about the level of information available on political matters, only 5 percent say they have a great deal of information and 35 percent have a fair amount of information (40 percent in total), whereas 55 percent express an interest in political matters. These findings may illustrate that Belarus' system of information does not work properly and/or that the government is not interested in providing its citizens with more information on political matters. If so, there is reason to expect that Belarusians would show a high level of interest in new sources of political information. This interest may extend to foreign sources of information, including foreign media and personal communication.

### **Political Efficacy**

There is a general feeling of disengagement from politics for the Belarusian population. On a national scale, nearly three-quarters of the respondents (73 percent) say that politics is too complicated; even among those who are very interested in politics, the figure is 67 percent. However, residents of big cities, such as Minsk, are not as likely to agree that politics is too complicated. Although the residents of these cities are pessimistic about practical matters, they feel informed enough about the political process to understand political issues well. However, education, not location, is the major factor in people's understanding of the political system. Those who have higher levels of education are more likely to feel well informed about political matters. Thus, among people with primary and some secondary education, 75 percent agree that "politics is too complicated" while 9 percent disagree. Among respondents with a university degree, 58 percent agree with this statement and 37 percent disagree.

As far as political influence is concerned, the majority of respondents (77 percent) agree that they have no influence on the political process, and among those respondents, 56 percent completely agree with this statement. Even people with an interest in politics feel that they cannot play a real role in politics and therefore cannot influence the decision-making process. Seventy-two percent of those with at least some interest in politics and 84 percent of those with no interest in politics agree that they have no influence. By contrast, citizens of advanced democratic countries who are interested in politics understand that they can participate in a meaningful way. It only makes sense that the more they are interested in political matters, the more politically active they will be and, therefore, the more they will influence decision-making.

However, the contrary prevails in Belarus. Those who live in big cities, such as Minsk, are even more likely to answer that they cannot influence decision-making. This most likely indicates that the current political situation in Belarus leaves average citizens feeling that it is impossible to change the political situation through legal activities, such as elections or participation in political parties, or through nongovernmental organizations. These results

demonstrate respondents' pessimism regarding the future. Indirectly, these data support the contention that the current political environment in Belarus is under the tight control of President Lukashenko, who personally influences the political situation in the country more than all other political players combined.

**Figure 8. Attitudes toward Politics and Political Influence<sup>13</sup>**

	<b>Politics Too Complicated?</b>	<b>People Have Little or No Influence?</b>
Agree Completely	37%	43%
Agree Somewhat	36%	34%
Disagree Somewhat	12%	11%
Disagree Completely	5%	4%
Neither Agree/Disagree	2%	1%
Don't Know	8%	6%
Refused/NA	1%	1%
	<b>101%<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>a</sup>Rounding Error

### Political Isolation and Russia-Belarus Union

One of the major political issues for Belarus is its relationship with Russia and Western countries. Belarus depends on Russia for economic support, which, understandably, results in political dependence. Belarus is currently the only country of the former Soviet Union that has created a union with Russia as the first step toward total reunification in the future. In April 1997, the presidents of the two countries, Boris Yeltsin and Alexander Lukashenko, signed the first of many agreements. However, there is still no final agreement between the governments as to whether the countries will create a new state, a federation, or just maintain a close political alliance.

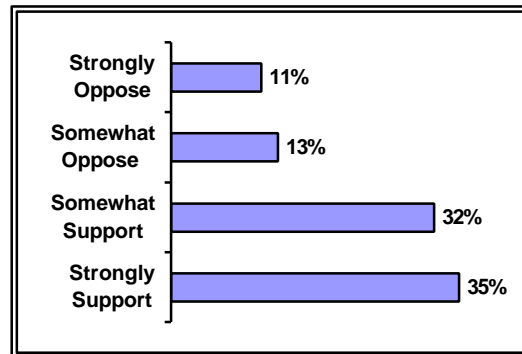
There are many differing opinions about the reunification of Russia and Belarus. Each political party in Belarus, as well as in Russia, maintains a unique position on the question. Included in this survey is a question about personal opinions on the formation of a Russia-Belarus union. For those familiar with the current political situation and with Belarusian history, it is not surprising to note that two-thirds (67%) of the population supports a union with Russia. Only 11 percent are strongly against the union, 24 percent do not support the union in general, and 7 percent do not know how they feel.

In analyzing both those who support and those who oppose a Russia-Belarus union, the significant factors are age, economic self-assessment, education, and location. The main finding is that there is no significant difference between ethnic Belarusians and ethnic Russians.

<sup>13</sup> How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:  
"Sometimes politics are so complicated that people like me can't understand what's really happening?"  
"People like me have little or no influence on what's going on in Belarus?" (n=1012)

Although it was anticipated that the majority of supporters for the union would be ethnic Russians, the survey shows that the majority of supporters are actually ethnic Belarusians.

**Figure 9. Opinions on Russia-Belarus Union<sup>14</sup>**



Although there is support for a union among people of all age groups, the percentage of supporters increases slightly with age. Among the age group 18-24 year olds, 51 percent support a union and 35 percent do not. For those 25-34, 59 percent support a union and 33 percent do not. Among those 35-44, 63 percent support and 30 percent do not; among those 45-54, 72 percent and 22 percent, respectively; among those 55-64, 77 percent and 14 percent, respectively; and among those 65 and older, 80 percent and 9 percent, respectively. Although women prevail among supporters of the union, this finding is not highly significant, as women simply constitute more of the elderly population of Belarus.

There is a strong association between economic self-assessment and attitudes toward the union: poorer respondents tend to be in favor of the Russia-Belarus union. The proportion of those opposing a union is 33 percent in the high-income bracket, 26 percent in the moderate-income bracket, 23 percent in the lower-income bracket, and 15 percent in the lowest-income bracket. The number of supporters is highest among those of a low economic class and lowest among the rich. Ethnicity is not a significant factor, as almost the same percentage of ethnic Russians and ethnic Belarusians oppose the union. However, the percentage of union opponents is higher among ethnic Poles and those who speak both Russian and Belarusian.

There is a strong correspondence between education level and support for a Russia-Belarus union: with higher levels of education, people are less likely to support the union. Among people with primary and some secondary education, 74 percent support the union (43 percent strongly support), while 13 percent oppose the union. For those with secondary education, 66 percent support (35 percent strongly support), while 26 percent oppose a union. For those with some university education, 51 percent support (15 percent strongly support) the idea, while 39 percent oppose it. Among those with a university degree, 65 percent support a union (30 percent strongly support) and 32 percent oppose it.

<sup>14</sup> On April 2, 1997, an agreement was signed on the union of Belarus and Russia. What is your personal opinion toward the formation of this union? (n=1012)

As expected, the proportion of those who are against the union is larger among market economy supporters. Thus, 43 percent of respondents who favor a market economy for Belarus oppose the Russia-Belarus union, compared with 22 percent of those who are indifferent to questions on economy and 17 percent who prefer a controlled economy.

The ratio of supporters to opponents for each oblast is: Gomel Oblast (85 percent to 9 percent), Vitebsk Oblast (73 percent to 17 percent), Mogilev Oblast (72 percent to 20 percent), Grodno Oblast (63 percent to 27 percent), Brest Oblast (61 percent to 25 percent), and Miensk Oblast (58 percent to 34 percent).

The economic and political crises in Belarus may have increased support for the union with Russia. In November 1996, after a referendum to change the Constitution, the 13<sup>th</sup> Supreme Soviet was disbanded. Soon after, the European Union failed to recognize the new Parliament, and Belarus consequently lost several important positions within the union. Since then, the country has become isolated. Another crisis in Miensk further aggravated the situation. In June 1998, a diplomatic scandal resulted in the withdrawal of almost all ambassadors from Western countries for a period of several months. The majority of the ambassadors returned to Miensk in 1999.

**Figure 10. Belarusian Isolation and Its Effects<sup>15</sup>**

	Is Belarus Isolated (n=1012)				
	Yes	Partially	No	Don't Know	Refused/NA
	28%	19%	32%	20%	1%
<b>[If YES or PARTIALLY] Does Isolation Cause Problems? (n=475)</b>					
Yes, definitely		55%			
Yes, somewhat		33%			
No, somewhat		5%			
No, definitely		1%			
Don't Know		5%			
Refused/NA		1%			

Some of the people surveyed feel that Belarus has become isolated as a result of recent events. In response to a question as to whether Belarus has become isolated from the world community, 28 percent say it has, 19 percent say it has become partly isolated, 32 percent say it has not become isolated, and 20 percent say they "do not know."

Education is a significant factor. A large portion (46 percent) of those with university or scientific degrees feel that Belarus is isolated, compared with 37 percent of those with some university education, 28 percent of those with secondary education, and 16 percent of those with just primary or some secondary education. Those with lower levels of education are far more likely to say that Belarus is not isolated (30 percent) or profess no knowledge on the matter (38 percent).

<sup>15</sup> Do you think that Belarus has become isolated from the world community? [If YES or PARTIALLY] Do you think this isolation creates problems for Belarus?

Among those who feel that Belarus has become isolated, a strong majority (88 percent) agrees that isolation has created problems. There is a direct relationship between education level and belief in a causative relationship between isolation and current problems facing Belarus. For example, among those with only primary and some secondary education, 13 percent agree that isolation has definitely caused difficulties. The percentage of those who agree with this causative relationship increases with respondents' level of education (24 percent, 39 percent, and 48 percent, respectively).

There is a negative connection between satisfaction with the current political situation and the belief that Belarus is isolated. According to the data, 31 percent of those who are "very satisfied," 36 percent of those who are "somewhat satisfied," 51 percent of those who are "somewhat dissatisfied," and 57 percent of those who are "very dissatisfied" feel that Belarus is at least somewhat isolated. Of those with at least some interest in politics, 55 percent say Belarus is isolated, while 46 percent of those only somewhat interested in politics and 26 percent of those disinterested in politics say the same.

It follows that those who agree that Belarus is isolated may have a better understanding of the problems connected with isolation. It is not necessarily true that all of them are pro-Western or anti-Russian, but it is safe to say that they may know more about the real political situation than do the other respondents. In addition, they tend to be much more open to new political ideas and initiatives than the rest of the population. The older the age group, the lower the percentage of respondents who agree with a connection between isolation and new problems for Belarus.

### **General Attitude toward the Government**

During the Soviet era, propaganda instilled in the population such ideas as "the Soviet government functions on behalf of all citizens," or "the government is doing its best to protect the interests of the Soviet people." The atmosphere of the Cold War tended to solidify the image of a Soviet government striving to do its best for the country.

In light of past paternalism, it is not surprising to find that a large percentage of respondents do not associate promised government protection of citizens' interests with democracy. Respondents are capable of answering such questions as they relate to the current Belarusian government, which is far from a model democracy. Figure 11 shows that 68 percent disagree with the statement that the government works in the interest of all citizens while only 14 percent agree with such a statement. Similarly, 26 percent completely disagree and another 33 percent somewhat disagree with the statement, "Government is doing the best it can to protect the health of the Belarusian people." The general level of distrust in the government is higher (68 percent) than the level of dissatisfaction with the government's efforts relating to health care (59 percent). Since the Chernobyl catastrophe, health issues have been among the most painful to discuss. More than half of Belarusians think the government does not protect their health. Many are concerned about the availability of drugs and adequate health care. Nevertheless, they evaluate the government's attempts to protect health more highly than they



evaluate the government overall. Almost one third of the respondents (31 percent) believe the government protects people's health, whereas only 14 percent agree that the government is effective in general.

**Figure 11. Attitude toward Government<sup>16</sup>**

	<b>Govt Acts in Best Interest of Citizens (n=1012)</b>	<b>Govt Protects Health of Citizens (n=1012)</b>
Agree Completely	4%	7%
Agree Somewhat	12%	24%
Disagree Somewhat	35%	33%
Disagree Completely	33%	26%
Neither	3%	3%
Don't Know	14%	6%
	<b>101%<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>99%<sup>a</sup></b>

<sup>a</sup>Rounding Error

At the same time, people feel fairly negatively toward their fellow citizens, since they do not believe that their fellow citizens can be counted on to act in the best interest of society. Only 5 percent completely agree with the statement, "My fellow citizens act in the interest of society," and 14 percent completely disagree with the statement. In total, 24 percent agree and 48 percent disagree with this statement. Apparently, people do not trust each other to act in the best interest of society either. Generally speaking it seems that the majority question both the goodwill of the government and fellow citizens.

## Local Soviets

All democracies assume that the local bodies of government work in the interest of the local community and society in general. In Belarus, as in the Soviet era, local power is held by the local soviets (city soviets and *rayon* soviets), executive committees, and local courts. It is hard to determine whether there is a need for reforms at this level of government unless one understands how the local power institutions function and how people evaluate them.

Given the high level of general dissatisfaction with the situation in the country, it is not surprising that only a few people say that the local soviets represent the interests of the population. Only 22 percent agree with this statement (4 percent strongly agree), and 45 percent do not agree (21 percent strongly disagree). There is a link between the age of respondents and their answers: those who are older than 45 are more positive than average, and more men strongly disagree with this statement than women. Responses to questions about the quality of the representation in the local soviets reveal interesting links to respondents' level of education as well. A majority of those with university or scientific degrees

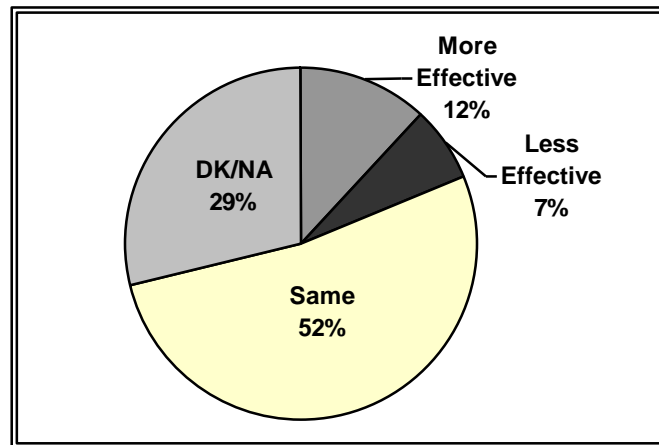
<sup>16</sup> How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

"Government officials act in the best interest of Belarus."

"Government is doing the best it can to ensure that Belarusian people have good health."

(52 percent) and those with some university education (54 percent) say the local soviets do not represent the population, but only 29 percent of those with less than a secondary education feel the same way. Furthermore, a large proportion of those with low levels of education (38 percent) cannot provide an answer, a far higher percentage than respondents in any other educational category.

**Figure 12. Effectiveness of Local Soviets**<sup>17</sup>



Belarusians also express little hope that the recently elected local soviets will be more effective than the former soviets. Overall, only 12 percent feel that the new soviets will be more effective, 7 percent feel they will be less effective, and 52 feel that their effectiveness will not change. Given that voters do not have a positive opinion of the previous soviets, this means that almost 60 percent of voters think that the new local soviets, elected in April 1999, will not function effectively in the near future. Women, people with moderate and less-than-moderate incomes (from the self-assessment), those who live in the country (small villages and towns), and those younger than 55 are predominant among those who believe the soviets will be more effective.

<sup>17</sup> Do you think that the local soviet elected in April 1999 will be more effective than the last soviet in addressing the problems facing your community, less effective, or about the same as the last soviets? (n=1012)

## FAITH IN SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

### Confidence

The cornerstone of civil society is confidence in social institutions and trust among people. To function, any democratic society needs a high level of trust among citizens. The higher the level of trust in each other and in social institutions, the easier it is to cooperate and to introduce democratic innovations.

For countries in the process of democratic transition, the level of trust in social institutions is often not very high. In the post-socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the level of confidence in social institutions is especially low. For example, as reflected in the USIA report on global views of democracy<sup>18</sup>, seven years into the transition, confidence in the most powerful institutions decreased, as did support for the government. In 1997, 67 percent of the population in Poland, 55 percent in Hungary, 68 percent in the Czech Republic, 73 percent in Slovakia, and 62 percent in Romania did not trust the national government; 47 percent, 51 percent, 71 percent, 65 percent and 46 percent, respectively, did not trust the police; and 51 percent, 44 percent, 76 percent, 59 percent, and 52 percent, respectively, did not trust the courts. In other words, almost half of the population (in some countries, two-thirds of the population) does not trust these institutions.

**Figure 13. Levels of Confidence in Institutions and Individuals<sup>19</sup>**

	Great Deal/Fair Amount	Partially	Not Too Much/None At All
Military forces		6%	20%
Lukashenko		6%	28%
State security		7%	23%
Mass media		17%	29%
Courts	36%	8%	36%
Ministers		7%	21%
Regional administration		8%	33%
Town, local administration	34%	9%	
Joint Belarusian/foreign business		7%	27%
Militia	32%	8%	
National bank	29%	6%	
National Assembly (Parliament)	28%	5%	
Private business	27%	9%	
Commercial banks	16%	6%	
Political parties	15%	7%	

<sup>18</sup> *The Nearly Universal Problem: Corruption*, pp. 7-8, USIA Briefing Paper, 1998.

<sup>19</sup> I am now going to ask you about several governmental and non-governmental bodies and groups. For each, please tell me how much confidence you have in them— a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all? (n=1012)

Similar patterns are visible in Belarus. The level of trust in both old and new social institutions is not very high, although there are institutions that engender higher and lower levels of trust. For example, the church (as an institution in general, regardless of the particular sect) has always had the highest confidence rating during the last few years, and the army quite often has ranked the second highest. Many public opinion surveys demonstrate this hierarchy among social institutions.

For a comparison of the levels of confidence we created an index of confidence, based on the mean level confidence for each institution. The procedure was as follows: respondents were asked to rate their confidence in different social institutions. Responses were generally similar across the range of institutions they were asked to evaluate. For this index, statements that indicate high confidence levels (a great deal, a fair amount) are scored positively. Responses that indicate low levels of confidence (not very much, none at all) are scored negatively. Participants who gave no response ("Don't know" or no answer) are eliminated from the analysis. Zero is the reference line which indicates neutrality (neither confident nor apprehensive, and those who declared "partial confidence in some but not others"). In the index, any bar rising above zero indicates an institution in which respondents (on average) have confidence. Any bar falling below zero indicates an institution in which they have little or no confidence. The further the bar is from zero, the greater the level of confidence (or lack of confidence).

Results determined the following hierarchy. Six institutions have positive ratings: the level of trust in them is higher than the level of distrust. They are the church, the army, State Security (KGB), the administration of the President, joint Belarusian/foreign business, and the mass media.

The other institutions have negative ratings: the level of distrust in them is higher than the level of trust. They are the Council of Ministers, the regional administration, courts, Parliament, the local administration, the national bank, private business, the militia (police), political parties, and commercial banks.

**Figure 14. Confidence Ratings**

<b>Positive Ratings</b>	<b>Negative Ratings</b>
Church (0.38)	Commercial Banks (-0.33)
Army (0.27)	Political Parties (-0.30)
State Security (0.16)	Militia (-0.15)
Presidential Administration (0.13)	Private Business (-0.14)
Joint Belarusian/Foreign Bus. (0.02)	National Bank (-0.10)
Mass Media (0.01)	Local Administration (-0.07)
	Parliament (-0.06)
	Courts (-0.04)
	Regional Administration (-0.02)
	Soviet of Ministers (-0.003)

On the basis of these findings, we can conclude the following:

1. The majority of the Belarusian population has much more confidence in the institutions of power (the army, State Security, and the President's administration) than in other institutions. This is a clear sign of general support for a "strong power" that can provide security and order. These two concepts (security and order) are quite popular in all the post-Soviet republics, especially in Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine.
2. Respondents decline to rate certain institutions about which they feel they do not have enough knowledge, understanding, or information. Some institutions, such as the media, the police, the army, and the President's administration, are familiar to the populace and thus most people feel qualified to rate them. (The President's administration does not include the President himself, whose rating IFES did not measure.) Interestingly, Belarusians feel less qualified to rate other institutions, thus leading more than 20 percent of respondents to answer "don't know" when asked about their performance.
3. The low confidence in political parties may mean that the population does not know enough about them or that the parties' images in the media are quite negative. Consequently, it is nearly impossible for parties to attract support during local or national elections. Nonpartisan candidates may have an advantage under these conditions.
4. The low level of confidence in commercial banks can be explained on the basis of the negative experiences people have had with banks either in Belarus or in Russia. Also, the scandals with MMM, "Vlastilina," and other commercial funds and banks known in Belarus from the Russian media undoubtedly contributed to this rating. It is interesting to note that the population is more uniform in its evaluation of political parties and commercial banks than in its evaluation of the presidential administration and the police.

For further analysis on Belarusians' faith in social institutions, please refer to the author's additional notes at the end of the text.

## **Corruption**

Another measure of confidence in social institutions is how people view corruption. To start with, corruption is not a "Belarus problem." Rather, it is a universal problem. For many countries in transition, corruption is among the most serious problems (although usually less serious than economic growth, unemployment, low living standards, or nonpayment of wages and pensions). This is true for such countries as Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria, to name a few.

Official corruption is seen as common in Belarus by a large and growing majority of the population: 72 percent of the respondents say that corruption is "common," 37 percent say it is "very common," less than 4 percent say it is "fairly rare," and 1 percent "very rare." At the same time, 21 percent say they "don't know" or give no answer at all. These answers perhaps reflect official government statements that corruption is responsible for shortages of goods and food, and for the failures of the economy of Belarus. There is a clear consensus on the problem of corruption, shared by a large majority of every social and political group.

The same holds true regarding perceptions as to the seriousness of the problem. Among those who think that official corruption is common, only 2 percent do not agree that it is a “serious” or “very serious” problem. This means that 94 percent of the respondents consider corruption to be a serious problem.

**Figure 15. Frequency and Seriousness of Corruption**<sup>20</sup>

	Frequency of Corruption (n=1012)					
		Very Common	Fairly Common	Fairly Rare	Very Rare	Don't Know
		37%	35%	4%	1%	21%
<b>[If VERY or FAIRLY COMMON] Seriousness of Corruption (n=724)</b>		▼	▼			
	Very Serious		59%			
	Fairly Serious		35%			
	Not Too Serious		2%			
	Don't Know		3%			

Figure 16 shows public perceptions with regard to the extent of corruption within various Belarusian institutions.

**Figure 16. Corruption in Institutions**<sup>21</sup>

	Very/Fairly Common	Very/Fairly Rare
Militia	64%	9%
District or City Administration	59%	9%
Oblast Administration	57%	8%
Courts	56%	13%
Commercial Banks	53%	8%
Private Business	52%	10%
National Bank	48%	11%
Council of Ministers	47%	8%
Military Forces	42%	21%
Political Parties	42%	12%
Joint Belarusian/Foreign Bus.	42%	10%
Mass Media	40%	20%
National Assembly (Parliament)	36%	12%
State Security Service	35%	20%
President Lukashenko's Adm in.	34%	27%
Church	12%	49%

<sup>20</sup> In your opinion, how common is the problem of official corruption in Belarus?  
[If 'Very' or 'Fairly' Common in Q60a] How serious is this problem?

<sup>21</sup> For each body or group I mention, please tell me whether, in your opinion, corruption is very common, fairly common, fairly rare, or very rare?

According to public opinion, the most corrupt institutions are the militia (64 percent), the local administration (59 percent), the courts (56 percent), the oblast administration (56 percent), commercial banks (53 percent), and private business (52 percent). Other institutions are perceived to be less corrupt (less than half of the respondents said they were corrupt). The least corrupt institution in society is perceived to be the church: only 12 percent think it is corrupt while 49 percent say it is rarely or fairly rarely corrupt. For other less corrupt institutions the proportion of those who feel that corruption is rare or fairly rare is between 20 percent and 27 percent: President Lukashenko's administration (34 percent and 27 percent, respectively), state security (35 percent and 20 percent), and the media (40 percent and 20 percent). As for the Parliament, 36 percent say that it is corrupt, while 12 percent perceive it to be rarely or fairly rarely corrupt. It is interesting to note that more than four out of ten do not express an opinion about corruption in the Parliament. This supports the conclusion that the level of interest and the level of available information about the current Parliament in Belarus are extremely low.

Although the level of confidence in the army is among the highest, its degree of corruption is perceived differently: 42 percent say the military forces are corrupt, while only 21 percent say they are rarely or fairly rarely corrupt. Thus, even though people trust the armed forces, they see the military as a corrupt institution.

As was found with the question regarding level of confidence in an institution, almost one third of the respondents fail to express an opinion about corruption. This shows either a lack of interest in or insufficient information about social institutions. Perhaps one can attribute this to a high level of political and social passivity in post-Soviet Belarus.

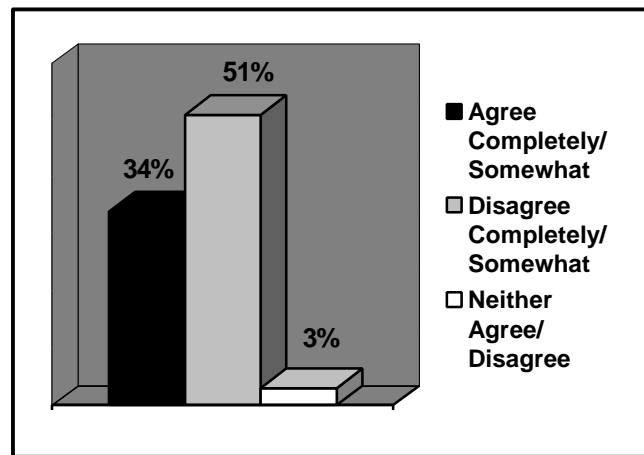
As in the previous question, it is necessary to state that this question included no evaluation of President Lukashenko. The respondents evaluated Lukashenko's administration, but not the President himself. However, as is clear from the large differences in responses on this particular issue, part of the respondents evaluated this level of administration much higher than the other two levels of administration: the oblast level and the local (city or rayon) level. This gap may be a result of their attitude towards Lukashenko himself rather than towards his administration due to the fact that the average evaluation of the oblast and district/city administration is very critical: almost six out of ten people think it is corrupt.

## VOTING IN BELARUS

### General Attitude toward Voting

It is difficult for people living in Western democracies to understand why people in transition countries do not highly value their right to vote. However, a majority of people in post communist Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus do not feel that voting gives people an opportunity to influence decision making in their countries.

Figure 17. Voting Influences Decision-Making?<sup>22</sup>



Given the current political circumstances, in which the President can change any law and enforce his personal decision on any issue, it is not surprising that Belarusians are pessimistic about their ability to influence decision-making. Many people have taken part in the several referenda and elections held during the last four years of President Lukashenko's term in office. Many have demonstrated against Lukashenko and have been imprisoned. However, there have been no practical changes in the regime. On the contrary, there are now many more limits and restrictions on democratic participation than there were a few years ago. As a consequence, many people of various age groups and backgrounds are pessimistic about their opportunities for influencing politics.

On average 34 percent believe voting is influential. Belarusians older than age 55 are more optimistic regarding the impact of voting than are their younger compatriots: 44 percent of those older than age 65 and 42 percent of Belarusians age 55-64 agree or somewhat agree that voting gives them a chance to influence decision making. Only 29 percent of people between 18-24 and 28 percent of people age 25-34 agree with this statement. Indeed, the most critical age group are those between 25-34. Sixty-four percent of this group do not agree with the statement (33 percent completely disagree). All the other age groups under 55 are more pessimistic than average, while people older than 55, and especially those older than 65, are either more optimistic than the average or do not know.

<sup>22</sup> How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Voting gives people like me a chance to influence decision-making in our country?



Socioeconomic status is a significant factor in perception. The proportion of those who feel that voting does influence decision making is much lower both in the high status group (7 percent) and in the low status group (4 percent). The percentages of those who disagree that voting influences decision making are 71 percent among the high status group and 42 percent among the low status group. Twenty-nine percent of the low status group answer "do not know" versus only 4 percent of those in the high status group.

Residents of Gomel and Mogilev oblasts are much more optimistic about the influence of elections than those of Miensk and Brest oblasts, with Miensk city in the lead (only 34 percent completely disagree). Market supporters are more pessimistic than the average as well.

It is necessary to mention that 49 percent of those who say they will strongly support Lukashenko in the 2001 elections feel that voting allows them to influence political matters, while only 33 percent of this group feel that voting does not provide any influence. This contrasts sharply with the 22 percent of Lukashenko's strong opponents who feel that voting influences decision-making and the 73 percent who do not. Thus, Lukashenko's supporters are more likely than Lukashenko's opponents to feel that voting affects decision-making.

### **Who Voted in the 1996 Referendum?**

Voting is not a decisive factor in differentiating President Lukashenko's supporters and opponents. Usually, a majority of the population takes part in any election. When asked, for example, whether they voted in the 1996 Referendum, which disbanded the 13<sup>th</sup> Supreme Soviet and changed the Constitution, 60 percent answered "yes," 19 percent, "no," and 18 percent, "do not know." It is important to note that some respondents were younger than 18 in 1996 and therefore could not participate in the referendum.

Who voted?

- Sixty percent of Belarusians of voting age participated in the elections.
- Among those older than 45, more than 60 percent voted.
- Men and women were equally likely to vote.
- Only 44 percent of those in the low socioeconomic level voted.
- Forty-six percent of those aged 18-24 say they did not vote.
- The percentage of people in Brest (48 percent) and Mogilev (51 percent) oblasts who voted is lower than the average.
- The percentage of people in Grodno (73 percent) and Vitebsk (69 percent) oblasts who voted is much higher than the average.
- There are no significant differences between rural and urban dwellers in terms of voting likelihood.
- Only 44 percent of the supporters of a planned economy say they voted, while 61 percent of the supporters of a market economy voted.

### Future Voting for the 2001 Presidential Elections

There is no direct connection between respondents' political preferences and their plans to take part in the presidential elections in 2001. Almost 75 percent of the respondents say they will vote in 2001, while only 8 percent say they will not vote. This means that under the current political conditions, it will not be a problem for the government to organize the presidential elections in 2001, whether the world community approves of them or not. The results also show that the opposition does not have popular support in Belarus, as will be explained below.

Figure 18. Voting in 2001?<sup>23</sup>

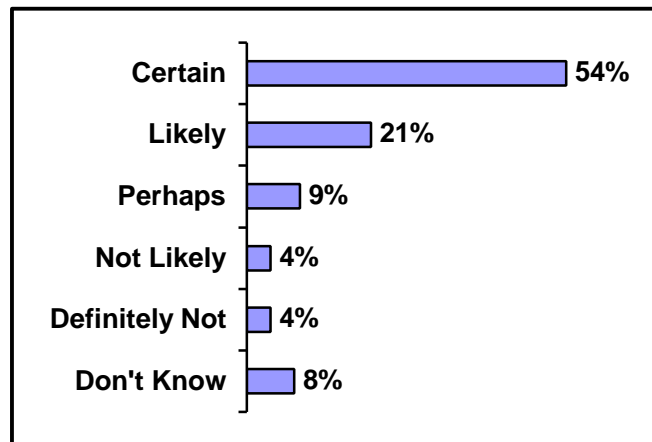
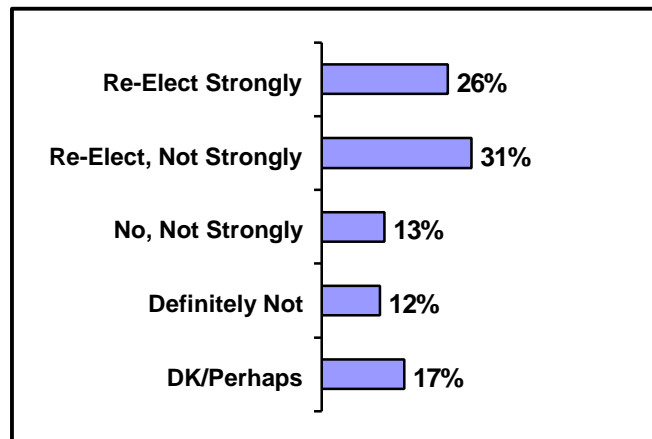


Figure 19. Re-Elect Lukashenko?<sup>24</sup>



When asked about re-electing President Lukashenko, more than half of the respondents (57 percent) say they would vote to re-elect him. The percentage of those who strongly want to re-elect Lukashenko is about 26 percent. They support Lukashenko for political rather than economic reasons, and thus it would be extremely difficult to change their opinion. Almost the

<sup>23</sup> How likely are you to vote in the 2001 election for President? (n=1012)

<sup>24</sup> In general, would you say that A.G. Lukashenko has done his job as President well enough to be re-elected for the next term? (n=1012)

same proportion of the respondents do not want to re-elect Lukashenko (25 percent), again for political reasons. The data show that approximately one-quarter of the population supports Lukashenko unconditionally, probably because he represents a strong populist leader in whom they trust. They seemingly appreciate the social order provided by Lukashenko's regime.

Another 31 percent profess moderate support for Lukashenko. Their support, however, is dependent on Lukashenko's ability to maintain the current economic and political situation. Lukashenko, therefore, cannot afford further deterioration of the conditions in the country, because his supporters may change their votes if their own economic conditions worsen.

Both those who strongly oppose and somewhat oppose Lukashenko are so dissatisfied with his performance that they will probably oppose him regardless of the situation in Belarus.

Some characteristics of Lukashenko's supporters and opponents are listed below.

### **Lukashenko's Supporters Are:**

- over age 55;
- educated to only the primary (77 percent) or secondary (56 percent) level;
- from the low income groups (72 percent of the lowest economic group and 62 percent of the "lower than moderate" group);
- ethnic Belarusians (58 percent support Lukashenko);
- residents of rural areas, especially villages (66 percent) and small towns (63 percent);
- from the Vitebsk and Gomel regions (79 percent and 72 percent, respectively, strongly support Lukashenko), or from the Grodno and Mogilev regions (56 percent and 66 percent, respectively, at least somewhat support Lukashenko);
- supporters of a state-controlled economy (57 percent of those who strongly support a state economy, and 80 percent of those who fairly strongly support it);
- those who say "Belarus is a democracy" (78 percent);
- those who say the April 1999 elections were honest (88 percent among those who strongly agree that the elections were honest);
- those who believe human rights are of average importance; and
- those who are not necessarily satisfied with the current situation.

### **Lukashenko's Opponents Are:**

- younger: 72 percent of strong opponents are age 18-44, and a majority of those at least somewhat opposed are 18-54 (for those 18-24, 32 percent at least somewhat oppose Lukashenko; for those 25-34, 37 percent; and for those 35-54, 28 percent);
- university-educated (42 percent) or have a university degree (45 percent);
- ethnic Russians (30 percent, compared with 24 percent of ethnic Belarusians);
- residents of Miensk (42 percent), oblast cities (29 percent) and other cities (28 percent);
- residents of Miensk Oblast (39 percent) or Brest Oblast (31 percent);
- those who think Belarus is not a democracy (51 percent);

- those who say the April 1999 elections were not very honest (50 percent) or not at all honest (55 percent);
- people who feel Belarus is isolated;
- strongly pro-market (51 percent) or at least somewhat pro-market (35 percent);
- supporters of human rights (among Lukashenko's strong opponents, the number of those who say "human rights are important" is four times greater than the number of those who say they are "not important." )

### **The Uncommitted Voters**

Uncommitted voters, those who did not give a clear answer in regard to Lukashenko's re-election, represent 19 percent of the respondents. On average, they are very concerned about the national economy: 45 percent want their candidate to do something about the economy. However, they are more skeptical about political candidates in general: 10 percent spontaneously report they do not believe in the promises of candidates, and another 20 percent state they "do not know" which questions will be important to them in 2001. However, 49 percent of them know about the May presidential elections, and 15 percent support the May elections (or, 29 percent among those who know about these elections).

These data may show that this group consists of people who simply do not want to disclose their true opinions about Lukashenko or the upcoming elections in general. If there are alternative candidates to Lukashenko in the 2001 elections, it is quite possible that they will support these candidates.

### **Important Issues for the 2001 Presidential Election**

The most important issues for the 2001 elections will deal with Belarus' economic situation: more than half the respondents want the next president to end inflation, reduce unemployment, and reverse the decline in quality of life and standard of living. An additional 8 percent mention social problems, such as shortages of adequate housing and food.

These data indicate that the economy will be the main issue in the 2001 election. If President Lukashenko fails to improve the economic situation, his chances for winning will decrease because many uncommitted voters will not vote for him. However, this does not necessarily mean that he will lose the election. The outcome will be determined by many factors, especially if a popular opposition candidate emerges to challenge Lukashenko.

**Figure 20. Important Issues for 2001 Presidential Elections<sup>25</sup>**

	(n=1012)
Solve economic problems	28%
Raise standard of living	19%
Stop inflation	8%
Solve social problems	8%
End crisis (general mention)	5%
Restore law and order	4%
Make a better future (general mention)	2%
Provide jobs	2%
Bring democracy	2%
Improve health care	2%
Other	8%
Don't believe promises	7%
Don't know	20%
	<b>115%</b>

<sup>25</sup> The promise to solve which problem, given by a candidate for President, will be decisive for you in choosing the President of the Republic of Belarus in 2001? (Open-ended)

## PERCEPTIONS IN BELARUS OF THE APRIL 1999 ELECTIONS

This survey was conducted soon after the April local elections in Belarus. Several political parties did not participate or could not participate in the elections because of the new law on elections adopted in December 1998. Foreign observers did not observe the elections. Public opinion, therefore, is a very important source of information on the 1999 election process.

### Voting in the April 1999 Elections

According to the results of the survey, 69 percent of the respondents voted in at least one round of the April elections. A majority of these, 66 percent, or 47 percent of all respondents, voted only in the first round because there was no second round. Twenty-eight percent said they did not vote. A majority of those who did not vote were young people: 51 percent of those 18-24 and 30 percent of those between 25 and 44 did not vote. Of those older than 45, the number who did not vote was lower than the average (28 percent).

**Figure 21. Voting in April 1999 Elections<sup>26</sup>**

	(n=1012)
Voted first round, no second round	47%
Voted first round, didn't vote second round	7%
Voted second round only	2%
Voted both rounds	15%
Did not vote either round	28%

Similar trends were observed among people with different levels of education. By and large, respondents either voted in the first round and did not face a second round, or they did not vote at all. One interesting finding of the survey was that that 63 percent of those with only a primary education voted in the first round irrespective of the second round, compared with only 45 percent of those who hold university degrees. It was especially surprising to find that more educated groups are far less likely to vote. Consider these figures of those who did not vote: 18 percent of those with only a primary education, 30 percent of those with a secondary education, 40 percent of those with some university education, and 32 percent of those with a university degree. Apparently those with less education voted far more consistently in the April elections.

People of a high socioeconomic status were less likely to vote than the average. Gender was not a factor in this question. The residents of Miensk Oblast, Mogilev Oblast, and Brest Oblast voted on a level lower than the average, at 35 percent, 34 percent, and 31 percent, respectively. As expected, more people in the capital ignored the elections than the average: 41 percent of Miensk citizens did not vote. (This figure constitutes 25 percent of all those in Belarus who said they did not vote).

<sup>26</sup> Did you vote in the April 4, 1999 local elections and, if applicable, the April 16 second round of local elections or not?

Forty-three percent of strong supporters and 32 percent of weak supporters of a market economy did not vote. In addition, 33 percent (more than expected) of strong supporters and 20 percent of weak supporters of a state-controlled economy did not vote.

Among those who think Belarus is isolated and that isolation has created problems, the number of those who did not vote was one-third greater than the average.

There were no significant differences in voting likelihood between those who strongly support human rights and those who do not strongly support human rights. Among those who are satisfied with the current situation and respect the government, more people than average did not vote.

### Why People Did or Did Not Vote

When asked why they did not vote, people gave a variety of reasons. Some stress political reasons (they do not believe in the candidates or their programs, do not trust the elections, or do not believe in the legitimacy of the elections). Others note "technical," or practical, reasons (no passport, sickness, no time, out of town, or they had to work). Some blame a lack of information about the candidates. Still others cite personal reasons resulting from a general alienation from the political process (or a lack of personal interest).

The reasons many people give for voting are quite interesting. Figure 22 summarizes both their reasons for voting and not voting.

**Figure 22. Reasons for Voting/Not Voting<sup>27</sup>**

Reasons for Not Voting (n=1012)		Reasons for Voting (n=1012)	
Couldn't vote (sick, out of town, etc.)	13%	Civic duty	28%
Not interested in voting	10%	Wish to improve country's future	7%
Don't believe elections legitimate	6%	Accustomed to voting	7%
Lack of information about candidates	2%	To choose a deputy	7%
Not satisfied with candidates/programs	2%	Agitation (election) campaign	3%
Other	1%	Want to participate	3%
Don't know/NA	2%	Liked the candidate	3%
		Compelled to vote	2%
		Other	4%
		No particular reason	2%
		Don't know	2%
		No response	5%

<sup>27</sup> (If did not vote) What is the main reason why you did not vote? (Open-ended, n=1012)  
(If voted) What is the main reason why you took part? (Open-ended, n=1012)

## Most Important Issue

When asked which issue was the most important when deciding which candidate to support, the answers could be grouped as illustrated in Figure 23.

**Figure 23. Important Issues when Voting<sup>28</sup>**

	(n=1012)
Liked the candidate	24%
Know the candidate personally	5%
Necessary to vote for somebody	4%
Well informed about candidate's activities	4%
Platform	4%
Friends, relatives recommended him/her	4%
Candidate reflects my interests	3%
My civic duty	3%
Hope for better future	2%
Other	5%
Don't know	8%
No response	11%

## Rating the Election Process and Organization

The overall impression of the 1999 elections, as stated by the survey respondents, is positive. Overall, 15 percent of the respondents feel the April 1999 elections were very well organized, and 37 percent believe they were somewhat well organized. Fourteen percent believe the elections were not very well organized, and 7 percent thought they were not at all well organized. On a national level, a majority of people (66 percent) living in villages say the elections were very well (25 percent) or somewhat well (41 percent) organized. However, only 3 percent of Miensk residents say the elections were well organized, while 32 percent say they were somewhat well organized.

Among the regions, the most positive evaluations were given in Gomel (27 percent) and Grodno (22 percent) oblasts. People in Miensk Oblast and Brest Oblast evaluated the elections' level of organization two times more negatively than average (7 percent versus 15 percent).

## Confidence in Members of Election Commissions is Divided

There is a significant division in responses regarding the members of election commissions. A plurality (44 percent) have at least "some" confidence in members of election commissions, but only 12 percent say they have "a great deal of confidence" in them. One out of five polled (21

<sup>28</sup> Which issue was the most important to you when making your decision to vote...?



percent) say they do not have very much confidence or have no confidence whatsoever in members of election commissions.

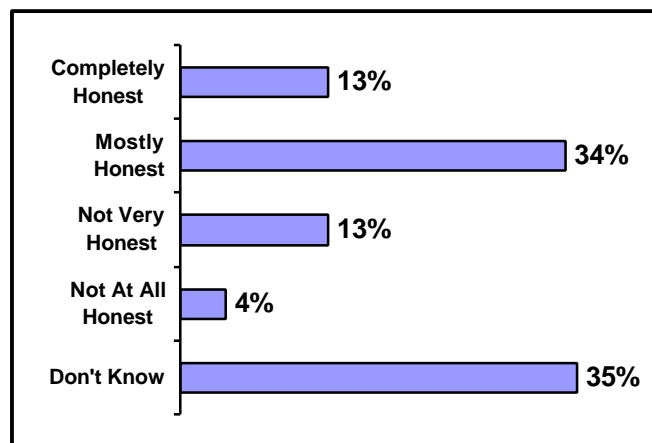
There is a direct connection between the age of the respondents and their evaluations of the election commissions. People age 55 and older evaluate election commission members much more positively than young people and middle-aged people.

Among the regions, the highest levels of confidence in election commissions are found among residents of the Gomel, Grodno, and Vitebsk oblasts (53 percent, 43 percent, and 58 percent, respectively), while more than half (52 percent) of Miensk Oblast residents say they have “no confidence” at all. It is difficult to say whether the Gomel, Grodno, and Vitebsk oblasts really organized elections better or whether this part of the population is simply less critical of the election commission. It is also possible that these respondents’ attitudes are more conformist. People in Miensk Oblast, as usual, are much less confident in election commissions than are people in any of the other regions.

Moderate supporters of a planned economy report high levels of confidence in members of election commissions: half of them had “a great deal of confidence” and 34 percent say they had “some confidence.” Half of those who do not have confidence in election commissions are supporters of a market economy.

### Overall Honesty of the April Elections

Figure 24. Honesty of April Elections<sup>29</sup>



As figure 24 shows, only 13 percent of respondents feel that the April elections were “completely honest.” Thirty-four percent believe the elections were “mostly honest.” Seventeen percent, still a significant proportion, say the elections were “not very honest” or

<sup>29</sup> On the whole, how honest were the April 1999 elections in your opinion? (n=1012)

“not at all honest.” The second largest response (35 percent) was from those who say that they do not know whether the elections were honest.

What is most interesting is to determine who said that the elections are, in general, honest. A higher than average percentage of people aged 18-44 think the elections were dishonest (21 percent). More than 60 percent of those older than 55 believe the elections were honest.

Gender differences do not lead to differences of opinion. Ethnicity, however, does. Russians, again, are slightly more critical than ethnic Belarusians, and Russian-speaking ethnic Belarusians are less critical than average. Differences in perception according to socioeconomic status are significant: a majority of people with high and moderate income levels report that the elections were “mostly honest,” while a majority of people with lower incomes reported that the elections were “completely honest.”

Regional differences among respondents to this question are similar to the regional differences demonstrated in the previous question: residents of the Gomel, Vitebsk, and Grodno oblasts report that the elections were “completely honest” at higher than average levels. Ten times as many villagers (20 percent) than Miensk city residents (2 percent) say the elections were “completely honest.” Almost two thirds of those who live in the villages report that the elections were “completely honest” or “mostly honest.”

A belief in the honesty of the elections can be found at all levels of education. Regardless of education level, about a third of each category say that they think the elections were mostly honest, with percentages ranging from 31 percent for those with a complete secondary education to 42 percent of those with a university education. However, it should be noted that large percentages of each category also claimed not to know whether or not the elections were honest or not, with 44 percent of those with some university education leading the findings.

### **Responsibility for the Fairness and Honesty of Elections**

Following the question regarding the honesty of the elections, respondents were asked whom they felt was most responsible for the elections being or not being fair and honest. After completing a cross-tabulation of the two questions, some interesting distinctions were revealed.

The most frequent response from those who believe the elections were “not at all honest” is that they “don’t know” (46 percent). Nearly 50 percent of those who strongly believe that the elections were completely fraudulent cannot name anyone in particular who is responsible for the problems. A similar situation is evident among those who say the elections were “not very honest.” Polling station officials (26 percent) are the first among those accused. However, the next most frequent response is “don’t know” (20 percent). One in ten blame President Lukashenko. Other answers included individual candidates and the mafia.

At the same time, those who say the elections were “completely honest” or “mostly honest” are most likely to attribute this success first to the polling station officials (59 percent) and next

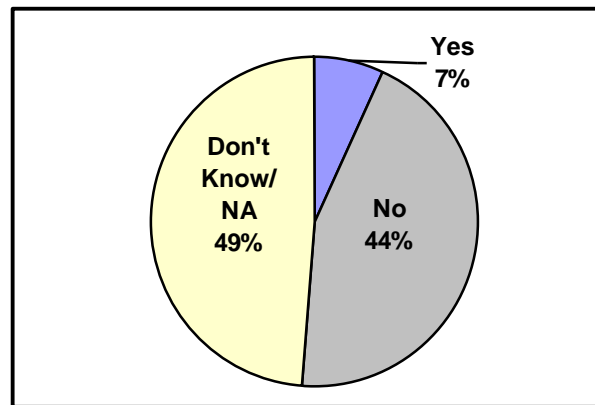
to the Central Election Commission (35 percent). President Lukashenko is given credit by 8 percent. The observers, press and international organizations are mentioned by 10 percent of this group.

Regardless of whether the respondents believe the elections were honest or dishonest, there is a tendency to blame (or to give credit to) election officials for the organization of the elections and for the entire election process. Other institutions or personal political actors are rarely mentioned. It is clear that many Belarusians feel election officials should be held accountable for the free and honest process. Whether respondents have any basis to distrust results and lay blame for perceived dishonesty or fraud within the process is another matter entirely. As can be seen from this survey, as well as past surveys in other countries of the region, respondents rarely say they have witnessed fraud or violations. When they say they have, the violation or fraud is usually nothing more than an irregularity (due to a lack of training on the part of officials), minor violations due to the continuation of previously accepted practices, or even due to their own lack of understanding of the law or election procedures. A lack of trust in the system may be nonetheless well founded or, at the very least, an understandable conclusion based upon a lack of information. In either case, it will serve administrators to address the issue.

### **Party Affiliation and Voting**

Respondents who voted (70 percent of all respondents) were asked about the party affiliation of the candidate for whom they voted in the April 1999 elections. When asked if the candidate they voted for had a party affiliation, the most common response was "don't know" (47 percent). Seven percent of those who voted say their candidate did have a party affiliation, and 44 percent of voters say their candidate did not have any party affiliation. These responses may seem strange to observers from a Western democracy, such as the United States. Because the United States has two main political parties, one could assume that the majority of voters would know the party affiliation of the candidate for whom they voted since this tends to be the decisive consideration. In Belarus, however, there are many parties whose similarities and relative obscurity make it difficult to connect individuals with a particular platform or party. This could be one reason why the highest response given to this question is "don't know." Furthermore, in Belarus, as well as in Russia and Ukraine, politicians change their party affiliation quite frequently, so it may be difficult for common people to keep track of candidates' party affiliations. If it turned out that voters based their decisions on how the candidate addressed the issues rather than party affiliation, the trend could be viewed more positively. However, as we have seen (Figure 23), this does not seem to be a decisive consideration. This is not to say that the other bases for choosing a candidate are less desirable or logical, especially when considering degree of confidence voters feel regarding what a candidate professes as compared to anecdotal information on a candidate's character or background. In fact it is common to see support based upon the "personal qualities" of a candidate throughout the region. When it comes to focusing on the details of solving society's problems through a coherent platform, candidates may be as unaccustomed in volunteering such information as are voters in asking for it.

Figure 25. Candidate Affiliated with Party?<sup>30</sup>



Some findings regarding different characteristics of voters:

- Men voted for a candidate who was affiliated with a party almost twice as often as women;
- People age 55 and older, and especially men age 65 and older, voted for candidates who were affiliated with a party much more often than any other group;
- People age 25-54 knew less about their candidates' party affiliations than did voters age 55 and older;
- Citizens of Miensk and Miensk Oblast voted for party-affiliated candidates more often than other citizens; additionally, they were more likely to know whether their candidates were party-affiliated than other citizens (one-third of Miensk city residents did not know, versus 47 percent of those living in the rest of Belarus).
- Half of those who voted for a party-affiliated candidate are residents of Miensk city and the Miensk Oblast.

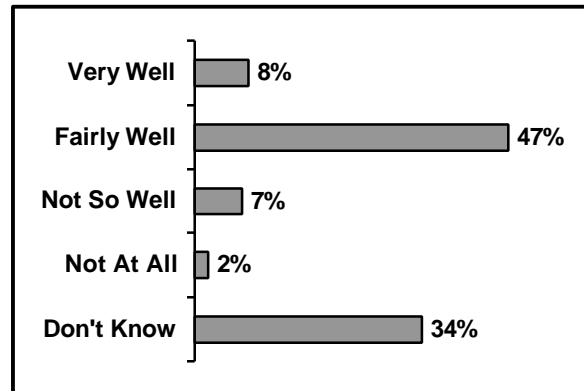
### Candidates Generally Reflect Views and Interests of Voters

Figure 26 outlines Belarusian voters' views on whether the candidates reflect the voters' interests. While only 8 percent of those who voted believe there was a candidate who reflected their own views and interests "very well," the largest response to this question was "fairly well," with 47 percent. Nine percent say the candidate they voted for did not reflect their interests well or not at all.

More than 1 in 3 of those who voted (34 percent) say they "don't know." This indicates a lack of communication between candidates and the electorate. To explain this phenomenon, it is necessary to look at Belarus as a country still in the first stages of understanding the democratic voting process. In an established democracy like the United States, most voters have at least a general idea from a candidate's party affiliation whether he or she reflects their views and interests. With parties still struggling to establish themselves in Belarus, voter responses will most likely continue to reflect an information gap between the electorate and the candidates.

<sup>30</sup> [If Voted] Is the candidate you voted for affiliated with a political party? (n=708)

Figure 26. How Well Do Candidates Reflect Views of Voters?<sup>31</sup>



Regionally, 2 percent in the Brest Oblast and 15 percent in the Gomel Oblast say that the candidates represented their views “very well” (lower and higher than the average of 8 percent), while only 34 percent in Brest Oblast say the candidates represented their views “fairly well” (compared with the average of 46 percent). One can guess that something was wrong with the candidates in the Brest Oblast because so many people provide lower-than-average evaluations of the candidates and even more people answer “do not know” (41 percent). In general, the candidates in Brest and Grodno regions did not even represent their constituents’ views “fairly well,” according to the majority of the respondents. In Gomel, Mogilev, Vitebsk and Miensk regions, however, almost 60 percent of respondents say the candidates represented voters’ interests at least fairly well.

When we consider the connection between education levels and views on whether the candidates reflect voter’s views, only 3 percent of those with the highest levels of education say the candidates reflected their views “very well.” Nearly one-third believe that the candidates reflected their views “fairly well.” People with less than a university education seem to hold similar views on this issue.

### Incumbent Deputies as Candidates

Although a majority of the respondents voted in the April elections, their answers to the survey questions show that many of them were not interested in the elections and did not have enough information about the candidates. When asked whether the candidate for whom they voted was an incumbent deputy of the local Soviet, 30 percent of the sample, or almost 43 percent of those who voted, answered “do not know.” This number is even greater among those 18-24 (49 percent of this group did not know) and among the older age groups; 47 percent of the respondents 55-64 and 52 percent of those older than age 65 do not know whether their candidate was an incumbent deputy. Women were more likely than men to answer “do not know” (46 percent to 38 percent). In terms of socioeconomic status, only 31 percent of those with a high level of income say they do not know, versus 60 percent of those

<sup>31</sup> (If Voted) How well do you think the candidate for whom you voted reflects your own views and interests? (n=708)

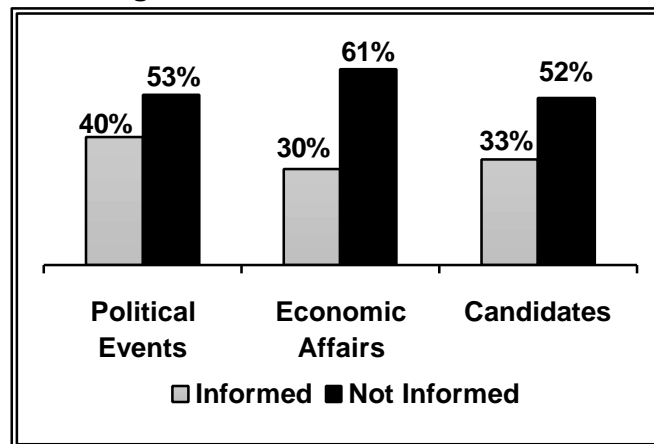
with a low income level.

As for regions, citizens of Mogilev Oblast, Vitebsk Oblast, and Brest Oblast say they “did not know” on a higher than average level (52 percent, 46 percent, and 45 percent, respectively). Unlike other questions, residents of the villages appear to have been better informed; only 38 percent say they did not know, versus 54 percent of residents of the towns.

These findings show the levels of political awareness among Belarusian voters. In addition, they show the availability of information about the elections. Among those who knew their candidate, 16 percent voted for an incumbent deputy and 38 percent did not. As expected most could not name specific issues that prompted them to vote for a certain candidate.

These findings reflect the paucity of information about political and social affairs that are available to Belarusian citizens. As figure 27 illustrates, a majority of Belarusians say they do not have access to very much information (or do not receive any at all) about political matters (53 percent) or economic matters (61 percent). A majority (52 percent) also did not receive enough information about candidates for the 1999 local elections to help them make an informed choice.

Figure 27. Levels of Information<sup>32</sup>



While not statistically significant, there were regional differences concerning information about candidates for the local elections. Approximately 12 percent of the respondents in Miensk, Vitebsk, and Mogilev oblasts and 7 percent of the respondents in Brest Oblast say they were well informed. These results were lower than the overall average of 15 percent. At the same time, 22 percent in Gomel and 25 percent in Grodno oblasts say they were well informed. However, the number of those who say they were not informed is higher than the average of 52 percent only in Miensk (62 percent) and in Brest (55 percent) oblasts.

<sup>32</sup> In general, how much information do you feel you have about political events in Belarus?  
In general, how much information do you feel you have about economic developments in Belarus?  
Do you feel that you received enough information about the candidates to make an informed choice for the 1999 local elections?  
(n=1012)

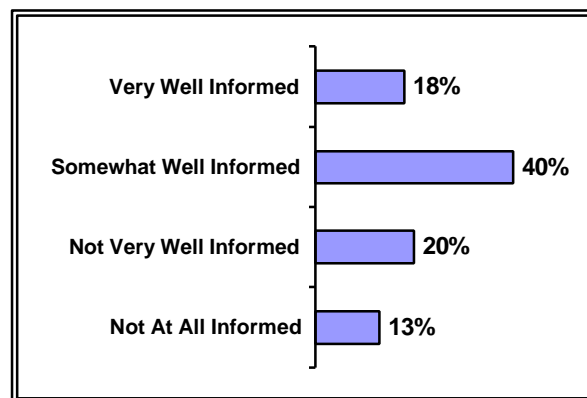
Differences between residents of rural areas and urban areas are also apparent: those who live in the villages report a much higher level of information about the candidates than people living in big cities, especially in Miensk (7 percent are well informed and 15 percent are somewhat informed). Although people in the villages gave more positive responses to this question, this does not necessarily mean that they actually had more information about the candidates than people living in big cities. However, it is safe to say that people in the villages are generally less critical about political matters, including the elections.

The number of those who say they were well informed about the candidates is lower than average among the strong supporters of the market economy. In general, these people are more critical regarding political matters and require more information. At the same time, more than half the people of lower-middle socioeconomic levels (a majority in Belarus) report that they had enough information about the candidates. Finally, those who criticize the regime are less likely than people who support the regime to say that they had enough information.

### Information about the Voting Process

Almost one third of the respondents say they were not well informed regarding the voting process. Only 18 percent say they were well informed. Forty percent say they were somewhat well informed. One in five say they were not very well informed, and 13 percent report that they were not at all well informed.

Figure 28. Information about the Voting Process<sup>33</sup>



While a small difference is apparent between men (who feel they were well informed) and women (who feel they were less well informed), the greatest gap is between people of different socioeconomic levels. At the highest socioeconomic level, 33 percent say they were well informed and 33 percent say they were somewhat well informed (66 percent in total), while at the lowest socioeconomic level, only 6 percent say they were well informed and 33 percent say they were somewhat well informed (39 percent in total). The majority of people of moderate and lower than moderate socioeconomic levels report that they were somewhat well-informed.

<sup>33</sup> How informed were you regarding the process of voting? (n=1012)

Regional differences are also apparent. A majority of the residents of Gomel Oblast report that they were either well informed (35 percent) or somewhat well informed (43 percent), both of which were higher than the average. Miensk and Brest oblasts report a higher percentage of those who were not very well informed (26 percent versus 20 percent average), and Miensk and Vitebsk oblasts exhibit the highest level of those who say they were not at all well informed (19 percent versus 13 percent). Twenty percent of the respondents in Miensk city report that they were not at all well informed, while almost two-thirds of respondents in the villages and towns report they were well- or somewhat well-informed.

A total of 33 percent of the respondents say they were not well enough informed about the voting process and the candidates during the April elections. One of the main reasons they cite is that the mass media did not provide them with enough information.

Levels of education created significant differences. More highly-educated people tend to be better informed. Among those with primary and some secondary education, 54 percent were informed; with secondary education, 56 percent; with some university education, 64 percent; and with a university degree, more than 72 percent.

### Main Source of Information

When asked about their main source of information regarding the voting process in the April 1999 elections, respondents gave the following answers (Figure 29):

**Figure 29. Main Sources of Information about April 1999 Elections<sup>34</sup>**

	(n=1012)
Television advertisements	15%
Television news programs	11%
Radio	10%
Newspapers	16%
Non-governmental organizations	-
Local polling station official	17%
Family members	5%
Friends or acquaintances	10%
Leaflet/poster	2%
Other	2%
Don't know	7%
Refused/NA	5%
	<b>100%</b>

Looking at each source separately, it is clear that no single information source stands out from

<sup>34</sup> What was your main source of information regarding the process of voting for the April 1999 elections? [Accept one response only]



the rest. Combining television ads and television news, television becomes the main medium of information. Newspapers follow next (16 percent), and radio information takes fourth place among them (10 percent).

The mention of local polling station officials as the main source of information by 17 percent of the respondents is rather surprising. The percentage of such responses was higher for people older than 35 and much higher for those older than 65 (22 percent). For people 18-34, TV ads were much more important than average (24 percent versus 15 percent), while for people older than 55 TV ads were two times less important than average (6 percent). People 35-64 say they prefer TV news programs (14-15 percent), while the younger and the older age groups say they relied on TV news less often than average (8-9 percent). People aged 55-64 say they prefer radio more than average (16 percent versus 10 percent). It seems newspapers are much more important for people older than 45 (19 percent compared with 10 percent among 18-24 year olds).

Family members and friends are an important source of information for young people aged 18-24. This is the only group for whom the percentage of respondents was higher than average; young people say they relied on family members (12 percent versus 5 percent). It seems that young people who voted for the first time received more information from family members and friends (as well as TV ads) than from other sources of information.

Women say local polling station officials were their main source of information almost two times more often than men (20 percent versus 12 percent). As for the other sources, there were no observed gender differences.

People of a high socioeconomic level say they paid attention to TV ads four times as much as people of a low level (28 percent versus 7 percent), for whom radio (18 percent) and friends (15 percent) were the main sources of information regarding the elections.

IFES observed the following regional differences:

- Residents of Grodno Oblast, Miensk Oblast, and Miensk city rate TV ads as their top source of information (24 percent, 19 percent, and 21 percent, respectively);
- Only 7 percent of the respondents in Grodno Oblast, 8 percent in Gomel Oblast, and 4 percent in the cities mention radio information;
- Newspapers are mentioned by only 10 percent of the respondents in Miensk city (the lowest level), although the residents of the capital have many more newspapers available to them than do people in other parts of Belarus;
- Local polling station officials are mentioned more often in Gomel Oblast (19 percent) and in the villages and cities (19 percent) than in other oblasts or in the towns;
- Forty-two percent of respondents listen to Radio Point, which generally does not focus on politics, and 31 percent use Ultra Short Wave.

### Influential Information Media

From the previous questions, it is apparent that many voters say they were not aware of the candidates' platforms. Nonetheless it is useful to analyze which informational media worked best. The respondents were asked which medium of information was the most influential in convincing them to vote for a particular candidate. Figure 30 lists the responses.

**Figure 30. Influential Information Sources for Voting<sup>35</sup>**

	(n=708)		(n=708)
Leaflet with candidate literature	26%	Opinion of friend	6%
Personal contact with candidate/rep.	10%	Television advertisement	6%
Opinion of family member	10%	Radio report	3%
Voters' meeting with candidates/ reps.	9%	Opinion of other	1%
Newspaper article	9%	Other	6%
Candidate platform	7%	Don't know	4%

The findings about the most influential media sources are as follows:

- The opinions of family members are always more significant among those who profess the lowest level (of socioeconomic status, of support for the market economy and multiparty system, of support for human rights, and perceived isolation of Belarus). Family opinions are only half as significant among people aged 45-64 than average— in other words, younger people say they were influenced by other members of their family twice as often as do elders;
- Newspaper articles are more popular among people older than 45 than they are on average;
- Leaflets are more popular among people 18-44, on average, than among the older groups. As for regions, people say they were influenced by leaflets more than average in Miensk and other cities (39 percent), oblast capitals (35 percent), and Miensk Oblast (34 percent).

As one can observe from these data, the mass media did not play a decisive role for Belarusians during the April elections. Voters were more influenced by interactions with family members and friends than by any information on the TV, radio, or in the newspapers.

However, political campaigning was the most influential factor in the 1999 election: in urban areas small leaflets were the most effective means of influencing people to vote for a certain candidate. Personal contact was especially important for the residents of villages (13 percent versus 9 percent average), as were voters' meetings (16 percent versus 9 percent).

In practical terms, this means that, in the future, candidates who have enough financial support to distribute leaflets in urban areas and to organize town meetings in rural areas have a better chance of winning regardless of whether their political platform is well-known.

<sup>35</sup> [IF VOTED] What was the medium of information that was most influential in convincing you to vote for [Candidate voted for]?

## Other Issues in 1999 Elections

When asked about the voting process, most respondents answer positively. The overwhelming majority of voters (94 percent) say their names were already on the voter registry when they went to vote on Election Day. Twenty-four respondents (3.4 percent) say their names were placed on the registry after they presented their identification.

Similarly, 94 percent of respondents say their personal information on the voter registry was correct when they voted. Less than one percent (only one respondent) had to travel to another polling station.

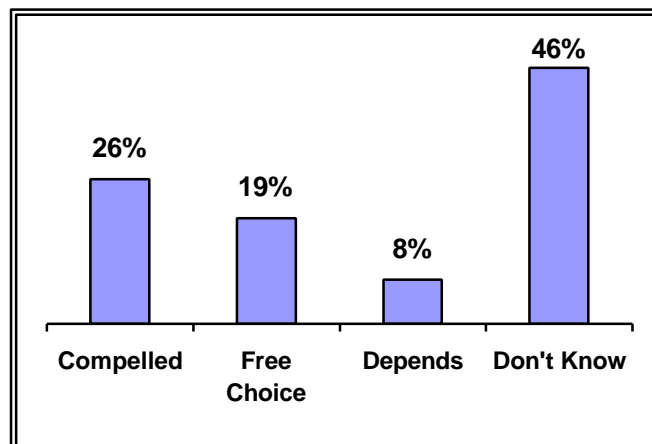
Only 4 percent of all those who voted say they personally witnessed any type of violation of the election law on April 4, 1999. Most (92 percent) say they did not witness violations, and 2 percent did not know (as tabulated from those who voted). The largest number of people who say they witnessed violations are from Brest Oblast (11 percent), while a vast majority of those in Miensk, Grodno, and Vitebsk oblasts, and Miensk city (94-96 percent) say they saw no violations.

When asked what type of violation of election law they observed, respondents say:

- Voting on behalf of family members (less than 2 percent);
- Voting without proper identification (less than 2 percent);
- Voting in the absence of secrecy (less than 1 percent).

## Military Personnel are Compelled to Vote

Figure 31. Military Compelled to Vote?<sup>36</sup>



More than one-fourth of the electorate (26 percent) believes that military personnel were compelled by their superiors to vote for certain candidates or parties. Only 19 percent feel

<sup>36</sup> In your opinion, are military personnel compelled by their superiors to vote for certain candidates or parties or do they exercise free choice in voting? (n=1012)

that military personnel exercised free choice in voting, and 8 percent say it depends. Most of those polled (46 percent) say they do not know.

We crosstabulated this question with gender to see if more women than men responded "Don't Know." Men are more likely than women to serve in the military in Belarus, and we assumed that more men would give a concrete answer. This assumption held true. Women (53 percent) were more likely than men (36 percent) to respond that they "do not know."

At the same time, male respondents (22 percent) are slightly more likely than women (17 percent) to feel that military personnel had free choice when voting.

Among the age groups, people 18-44 say they "don't know" less often than average. This same group (35 percent versus 26 percent) says that preference is dictated more often than average. This percentage is also higher than the percentage for the other age groups (23 percent for those age 45-54 and 9 percent for those older than 65).

The higher the socioeconomic status of the respondents, the greater the percentage who answer "do not know" (32 percent of lower level compared with 67 percent of high level), and the higher the percentage who feel military personnel are compelled to vote.

More people in Vitebsk (65 percent) and Gomel (50 percent) oblasts, as well as residents of villages and towns (51 percent), say they "do not know." Citizens of urban areas more often say that military personnel were compelled to vote for certain parties or candidates.

The results of a similar survey question posed in Ukraine in 1999 are as follows: 42 percent said military personnel are compelled to vote by superiors, 16 percent said there is free choice, 12 percent said it depends, and 29 percent said they do not know.

### **The Impact of Military Voting**

As for the impact of military voting, 23 percent of those who say either that military personnel were compelled to vote or that "it depends" agree that military voting had a "great impact" on the outcome of the elections. Another 40 percent say there was a "substantial impact," and 25 percent say there was "not much impact." The rest of the people say there was "no impact" (2 percent) or that they "do not know" (10 percent).

On a national scale, this means that 21 percent of the respondents agree that there was a great or substantial impact on the outcome of the elections because of military voting. Among the regions, more people in Miensk city (31 percent), oblast capitals (27 percent), Miensk Oblast (27 percent) and Grodno Oblast (26 percent) say that military voting had a great impact. Half of the respondents in Vitebsk Oblast and 45 percent in Grodno Oblast say it had a substantial impact on the outcome of the elections. More people in Gomel and Mogilev oblasts (35 percent) say it did not have much of an impact.

These concerns are most likely based upon widely circulated anecdotal information and a few first-hand accounts. The potential damage to civil-military relations caused by the perception that the military is being exploited by politicians can only increase as the population becomes more politically sophisticated and races become closer. The fact that the majority of respondents "do not know" whether preference is dictated should be almost as disturbing to authorities and professional service members as a definitive "yes."

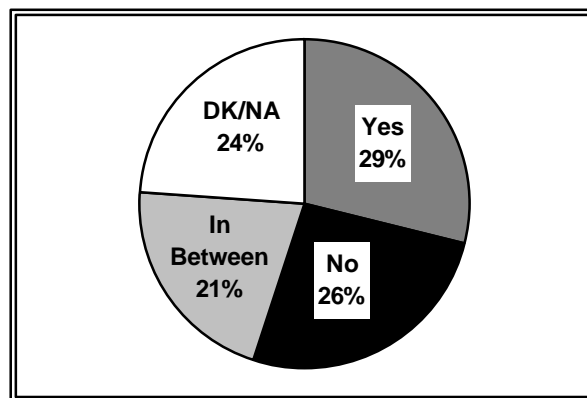
## CIVIL SOCIETY IN BELARUS

Democracy presupposes that a majority of citizens are interested in politics, respect and highly value individual rights and liberal freedoms, participate in various nongovernmental organizations, and have a good deal of information about the government from various sources, especially the mass media. All these conditions give people more opportunities to participate in electing representatives who will defend their interests.

Because Belarus is just beginning the process of democratization, these characteristics of a mature democracy are not well developed. However, some segments of the population are much more oriented toward democracy than others. It is helpful to characterize those who occupy the extremes on this scale.

For the post-communist countries, it is typical to combine some democratic elements with some non-democratic elements. Thus, some people evaluate their country as a democracy while others in the country do not.

**Figure 32. Is Belarus a Democracy?**<sup>37</sup>



In Belarus, where the authoritarian regime is getting stronger and human rights and liberal freedoms are restricted, almost equal percentages of respondents evaluate Belarus as a democratic country as see it as a non-democratic country. One out of five think Belarus is somewhere in between, and another 20 percent still do not know. This situation shows a split in opinions about the country. Opinions varied most between men and women: among those who consider Belarus a democratic country, 39 percent are men and 61 percent are women. Among those who could not evaluate the country, 31 percent are men and 69 percent are women, especially women older than 55 and living in rural areas.

There was a clear correspondence between economic self-assessment and evaluation of whether Belarus is a democracy: those with a low standard of living evaluated Belarus as a democracy five times less often than people with a high standard of living (3 percent versus the

<sup>37</sup> Would you say that Belarus is a democratic country, or is it not a democratic country? (n=1 012)

average of 16 percent who say that it is a democracy). Among those who say Belarus is not a democracy, 47 percent have a higher than moderate standard of living and 16 percent have a low standard of living.

Another interesting finding is that ethnicity is not a factor on the issue of democracy. Ethnic Belarusians and ethnic Russians answer quite similarly; slightly more ethnic Poles and Ukrainians say Belarus is a democratic country, but the difference is not significant.

The groups in which a majority say that Belarus is a democracy are:

- those living in villages;
- those older than 55;
- those assessing themselves at a low economic level;
- women older than 55 and living in the villages; and
- those who believe Belarus is not isolated.

### What Does it Mean to Live in a Democratic Country?

An analysis of open-end answers to the question, "What does it mean to live in a democratic country?" shows that a majority of people define a democratic government as one that provides rights and freedoms for its citizens rather than one that provides social welfare.

Figure 33. Meaning of Democracy<sup>38</sup>

	(n=1012)
Freedom of the press	17%
To be free	13%
Citizens' rights are protected by law	6%
Human, constitutional right observed	6%
Political freedoms, freedom of choice	5%
To live well	5%
Power of people, govt. listens to people	5%
Wealth, high standard of living	4%
Justice, equality before law	3%
Developed economy, jobs	1%
No crime, safety	1%
Other	6%
Don't know	23%
No response	15%

In general, more than half the respondents have opinions and are willing to share them. Forty-three percent of the respondents describe democracy primarily as a political regime that guarantees human rights, liberal freedoms, protection from the arbitrariness of officials, competent laws, fair taxation, equality for all before the law, and other such characteristics. A

<sup>38</sup> What does it mean to you to live in a democratic country? (Open-ended, multiple response allowed)

smaller group feels that democracy means economic benefits (good job, high standard of living, wealth, business, and free education); almost 9 percent gave these answers. Two percent of the respondents view democracy as a negative thing: they either say democracy is equal to life in the USSR or mention robbery and other crimes as the features of democratic life. For half of the respondents, the meaning of democracy was clear and correct. Those who stress human rights and law enforcement as the features of democracy are well-informed and well-educated: only a quarter of them have not completed their secondary education. The difference between men and women is less than 5 percent: more men stress human rights and law while more women stress economic benefits. There is no clear connection between economic self-assessment and a correct understanding of democracy: a majority of those who answered come from the moderate economic level rather than from groups above or below the average. More people with high interest in politics describe democracy as a political regime than as a social welfare state.

### **Human Rights**

In general, when asked about their knowledge of citizens' rights as guaranteed by the Constitution, the respondents demonstrate a rather low level of knowledge. Only 7 percent say that they have a great deal information; 31 percent have some information, while 29 percent say they do not have very much information. Understandably, this dearth of information makes it difficult for the people to act conscientiously and to participate actively in the social and political life of the country.

If one looks at those who are better informed about their rights, it is apparent that they are mostly between 18 and 44 with a high or moderate level of income and are from all ethnic backgrounds. Strangely, more than one-third of them live in the villages. It is possible their self-evaluations are not correct: perhaps they simply say they have a great deal information about human rights because their criteria of adequate information differs from the criteria used in Miensk city and other areas due to differences in lifestyles. It is difficult to prove whether these rural people are in reality well-informed about their rights, or whether they only claim to be well-informed simply due to a lack of opportunity to probe limitations.



**Figure 34. Information on and Familiarity with Constitution<sup>39</sup>**

Information on Constitution? (n=1012)		Familiarity with Constitution? (n=1012)	
A great deal	7%	Very familiar	8%
Some	31%	More know than don't	21%
Not very much	29%	More don't know than know	38%
None at all	27%	Not at all familiar	29%
Don't know	5%	Don't know	4%
Refused/NA	2%	Refused/NA	1%
	<b>101%<sup>a</sup></b>		<b>101%<sup>a</sup></b>

<sup>a</sup>Rounding error

Belarusians profess about the same amount of information about the Constitution as they do about human rights. Eight percent say they are very familiar with the Constitution, 21 percent say they are “more familiar than not,” and 38 percent say they are “more unfamiliar than familiar.” Twenty-nine percent are not familiar at all. Again, people living in the villages assess their familiarity with the Constitution more highly than did people living in any other locations. People age 25-44 assess their knowledge three times more highly than average. There are no significant differences between men and women, although in general men answer more positively, and thus consistently feel they have more knowledge in this area.

**Figure 35. Importance of Select Rights and Freedoms<sup>40</sup>**

(n=1012)	Very/Somewhat Important	Not Very/Not At All Important
Private property of individuals is protected by law	89%	3%
All can freely practice the religion of their choice	86%	6%
Honest elections are held regularly	81%	7%
Rights of minority ethnic groups are protected	76%	10%
One can choose from several parties and candidates	68%	17%
Right to publicly criticize the government is protected	57%	16%
All can form associations or union without govt. involvement	57%	21%
Citizens have the right to form political parties	56%	28%

One of the most interesting questions in this survey asked respondents to rate the importance of various human rights. The results show that these rights and freedoms can be placed in two separate categories. The first category includes rights that respondents consider more important. These are property rights, religious rights, honest elections, and minority rights. Almost 90 percent of respondents consider these four rights to be important (two-thirds say these rights are “very important”). This evaluation instills hope that the people of Belarus will support further reforms to protect private property and to provide for honest elections. As for

<sup>39</sup> How much information do you have about your rights as a citizen under the Constitution of Belarus?  
How familiar are you with the contents of the Constitution of Belarus?

<sup>40</sup> How important is it to you that the following rights be respected in the country where you live?

minority rights, fewer people say they are very important. This can be attributed to the fact that the ethnic situation in Belarus is not tenuous. Ethnic Belarusians tend to view minority rights as less important compared with those of other ethnic groups. Fewer than 3 percent said they experienced discrimination against them on ethnic grounds (many of them are Jews). The high level of support for religious rights also gives hope that new charities and religious NGOs may be easily accepted by people in Belarus.

A second category of rights seems to be of lesser importance to the respondents. While about two-thirds of the respondents say that these rights are important, only three or four out of ten consider them to be very important. This second group of rights includes the right to form political parties and different associations and the right to criticize the government and to have a choice among candidates during elections. This evaluation reflects population's relatively low level of political culture and the not very high level of involvement in civic activities.

The hierarchy of people's evaluations of different rights clearly shows that:

- an absolute majority of the population considers human rights to be important;
- two-thirds consider the protection of private property to be the most important human right;
- a majority of people believe honest elections are very important; and
- although not all people are religious (16 percent say they are not), religious rights are very important.

The survey included an open question about the meaning of the legal protection of individuals' private property. More than 60 percent of respondents gave an explanation. Their responses can be divided into categories in which economic issues (29 percent), judicial issues (19 percent), security issues (4 percent) and separation from the state issues (2 percent) were stressed. However, 7 percent gave a negative interpretation of the meaning of "legally protected" private property either by questioning the whole idea of private property or by being skeptical about the protection of private property under the current situation in Belarus.

The most significant factors influencing the level of support for human rights are age, gender, and economic self-assessment: those who are older, female, have a low income and are less supportive of human rights than average. Although there are no significant differences according to ethnicity, ethnic Belarusians nevertheless show somewhat less support for human rights than do ethnic Russians, Poles, Ukrainians, or those who speak both Russian and Belarusian at work and at home. Residents of Minsk and the major oblast cities are more devoted to human rights, including the rights of associations and political parties, than people living in the country or in smaller cities and towns.

In terms of age, 25-34 year olds are the most devoted to all human rights, although those in two other age groups (18-24 and 35-44) are nearly as committed to human rights as this group.

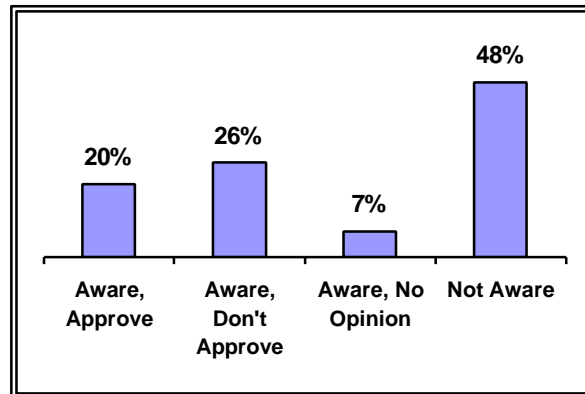
## Attitudes toward the Political Opposition

In November 1996, there was a referendum in which the majority of the voters supported some dramatic changes to the Constitution and agreed to give the President much more power. The 13th Supreme Soviet did not believe the success of this referendum was sufficient reason to make any serious changes to the Constitution. President Lukashenko disbanded Parliament, but those members of Parliament who agreed with the results of the referendum were allowed to become members of the new Parliament. However, the Council of Europe did not recognize the legitimacy of the current parliament and still considers the 13th Supreme Soviet to be legitimate.

On the basis of the old (1994) version of the Constitution, Lukashenko's term legally expired on July 20, 1999. To mark the end of the legitimate term of office, the opposition's Central Election Commission, headed by the ousted Chairman Viktor Hanchar, organized presidential elections in May 1999. President Lukashenko declared this election to be illegal. However, the political opposition decided to hold the election to demonstrate people's attitudes toward Lukashenko. The political clashes between the opposition and the President's supporters were unequal, because the opposition did not have enough financial support or access to the media to bring their message to the masses. However, the "illegal" presidential election took place: those who knew about the election and supported the opposition could vote May 6-16.

Because of the President's influence on the media and on the courts and police, many people were afraid to take part in these elections (many activists have been punished, fired, fined, or imprisoned), and some people were afraid of expressing their attitudes toward the May election. Perhaps, for this reason, only 53 percent of the respondents say they were aware of the opposition elections, while 45 percent say they were not. Among those who were aware of the elections, only 39 percent approved of them (this is equal to 20 percent of the total sample) while almost 49 percent of those who knew about the elections say they did not approve of them (a quarter of the total sample). The remaining 12 percent were uncommitted to either position. Both presidential candidates were from the opposition, so those people who support the current regime and President Lukashenko obviously would not have supported the May elections.

Figure 36. Knowledge of and Attitudes toward Opposition Elections<sup>41</sup>



Of the 20 percent who say they support the opposition elections, 12 percent are strong supporters and among the 26 percent who don't approve of the opposition elections, 17 percent strongly don't approve.

Our findings show that people aged 55 and older predominate among those who say they had no knowledge of the opposition elections. More women than men say they did not know about the elections; more ethnic Belarusians than Russians, Poles, or Ukrainians; more people with low incomes; more of those who live in the cities; and more of those who are less concerned with human rights.

Among those who strongly approved of the elections (strong supporters of the opposition) there are more people aged 18-34, more men than women, twice as many people with high incomes than with low incomes, more people living in Minsk city or in oblast capitals, and more people who consider human rights to be very important.

## Political Parties

Functioning democracies require at least two different political parties that can compete during the elections as well as a plurality of nongovernmental organizations that contribute to the functioning of civil society. Belarus has made the first steps in this direction. There were more than thirty political parties officially registered when this survey took place (after June 1, 1999, many political parties and nongovernmental organizations did not reregister because of difficult bureaucratic procedures and the necessity of indirectly recognizing the changes made to the Constitution in November 1996).

Most political parties are neither very large nor very influential in Belarus. Their platforms are not well known by the people. Besides the major parties, which seem to enjoy widespread renown more due to image than due to platform, these parties are first recognized for the personalities who comprise their leadership than for their positions on the issues.

<sup>41</sup> Are you aware of the proposal to hold presidential elections in May 1999?  
[If Aware] Do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove or strongly disapprove of the proposal? (n=1012)

A situation that could lead to a decrease in the influence of the existing political parties is their refusal to participate in the April 1999 local elections. Their reason for doing so was quite serious: the new law on elections, adopted by Parliament in December 1998, prohibited anyone (mainly political activists) who had a police record (i.e., people who had been arrested or fired) from taking part in the elections. Because of this law, many opposition parties decided to ignore the April elections. Thus, even those people who would have voted for opposition candidates could not do so unless the candidates participated in the elections against their parties' decisions. The list of parties whose candidates ran in the April 1999 elections is a short one. In total, fewer than 4 percent of voters say that their candidates were affiliated with any political party (Communist Party, 2 percent, Agrarian Party, 1 percent, Other—1percent). Moreover, just before the May presidential elections, the opposition parties – a majority of which are not represented in Parliament—could not agree on these elections. Their disagreement resulted in the withdrawal of Zyanon Paznyak, one of the two candidates, from the election just two days before it was completed.

There are only two political parties mentioned by the respondents whose candidates participated in the elections. Two percent mention the Communist Party of Belarus, one of the two Communist parties. This is the party that supports Lukashenko and whose leader, Victor Chikin, works in the Miensk City Executive Committee. Their supporters are mainly pensioners and former members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). This party is one of the biggest in Belarus, with approximately 10,000 members, but its real influence is based on its Soviet heritage rather than on its current activity. The other Communist party, the Party of the Communists of Belarus, does not support Lukashenko. Its members are also former members of the CPSU. In accordance with the survey data, this party's participation in the April elections was close to zero, because they believe the new law on elections is unfair.

The Agrarian Party, which 1 percent of respondents mention, is among the most well-known parties that represents the interests of the rural population (mostly, directors of collective farms). This party took part in the April elections.

Many other parties ignored the April elections, so voters did not mention them. Indirectly, the fact that fewer than 4 percent of respondents say their candidates were affiliated with any party demonstrates the low level of political influence the existing parties have on the population in Belarus. It is unlikely that during the next elections the parties will be able to convince the voters that they can provide effective leadership. For this reason chances for nonpartisan candidates may be better (if all other factors are equal). One-third say they do not know whether their candidates were affiliated with a party. This indicates that the key issue for voters is not the party affiliation of a candidate (Figure 25).

The survey data indicate that creation of an alliance or bloc in and of itself could not increase the ratings of opposition parties among the population. However, the negative evaluations of the opposition do not mean that respondents are against political pluralism or democracy in general. People will definitely support a strong opposition leader who would be able to compete with President Lukashenko. Because of the continuing aggravation of economic

conditions and the lack of political solidarity within the opposition, there is little hope that existing political parties will attract people to vote for their candidates.

The data prove that more than half of the respondents believe that political parties are necessary for Belarus (13 percent strongly believe they are necessary, and 38 percent believe they are necessary, but not strongly). Given the sharp political conditions described above and the strong political pressure on the opposition from officials in power, it seems to be a good sign that a majority at least supports the idea of political parties.

**Figure 37. Attitudes toward Political Parties<sup>42</sup>**

Necessity of Political Parties? (n=1012)		Importance of Multi-Party Elections? (n=1012)	
Necessary, strongly	13%	Very important	24%
Necessary, not strongly	38%	Somewhat important	34%
Not necessary, not strongly	13%	Not very important	10%
Not necessary, strongly	17%	Not at all important	12%
Don't know	18%	Don't know	19%
Refused/NA	1%	Refused/NA	1%
	<b>100%</b>		<b>100%</b>

Respondents aged 18-54 feel that parties are more necessary than those 55 and older. Ethnicity is slightly significant here: 49 percent of ethnic Belarusians and ethnic Poles, 62 percent of ethnic Russians, and 68 percent of those who speak both Russian and Belarusian think political parties are necessary. As expected, more people in Minsk and the oblast cities support political parties than do people in the country, more people who agree that Belarus is isolated, and, that isolation creates problems. Of those who are strongly market-oriented, 66 percent support political parties, versus 34 percent of those who are plan-oriented.

Even more people say that it is important to have at least two parties competing in an election. Among the 58 percent who agree that two parties are important, 44 percent (a quarter of all respondents) say they are "very important." The number of those who disagree with the idea that two parties are necessary for a democracy is significantly smaller than in the previous question: only 22 percent disagree (among them 12 percent strongly disagree).

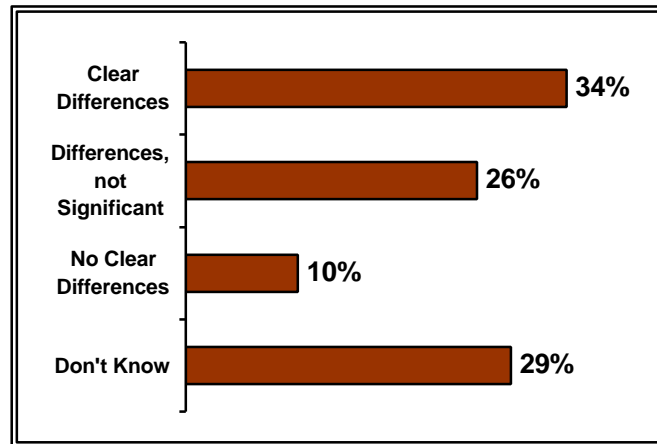
The number of those who agree with the necessity of two parties in the 1999 Belarus survey (58 percent) is close to the number of those who agree with the necessity of two parties in the 1999 Ukraine survey (61 percent), while 35 percent in Ukraine (versus 22 percent in Belarus) say having two parties is not necessary. This demonstrates that the political mentality of people in both countries is similar, and that the level of democratic development is also somewhat similar.

People age 18-44 are more likely to agree strongly with the need for at least two political parties than are people in other age groups; men are more supportive of political parties than

<sup>42</sup> Do you believe that political parties are necessary in Belarus or not?  
How important do you think it is for Belarus to have at least two political parties competing in an election?

women, as are people with high or moderate incomes. Ethnic Russians are more supportive than ethnic Belarusians, and those living in villages are two times less supportive than those living in Miensk or in major oblast cities. Support is two times higher among those who believe Belarus is isolated, three times higher among market economy supporters than among planned economy supporters (36 percent versus 12 percent), and four times higher among those who strongly support human rights than among those who do not (40 percent versus 10 percent).

**Figure 38. Differences between Parties**<sup>43</sup>



Although people do not strongly support political parties, many think there are distinct differences in how these parties solve the problems facing the republic. Because the most widely known parties are the Belarus People's Front (BNF) and the two communist parties, when people refer to the differences among political parties, they are most likely referring to the differences among these three parties. One-third say there are clear differences, and more than a quarter (26 percent) say there are differences, but that the differences are not so significant. Only 10 percent say there are no clear differences. However, almost 30 percent say they do not know.

### Non-Governmental Organizations

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are an integral part of civil society. In present-day Belarus, there are hundreds or thousands of NGOs. Most of them are small and not influential, and they function to solve routine problems, like PTAs. Many people are members of such NGOs, but they do not remember their membership and do not mention it when asked about NGOs. There are some other small unregistered NGOs, such as cultural groups and associations, that participate in civil activities in Belarus but do not have the money or the time to be registered, as their functions are very simple and unrelated to politics.

<sup>43</sup> Do you find that different political parties and blocs have distinct differences in how they solve problems that the republic is facing? (n=1012)

Usually people think NGOs are limited organizations, like political parties or other politically oriented organizations with fixed membership. For this reason, a majority of the respondents interviewed in Belarus identified very few NGOs. It is quite unlikely they did this on purpose; perhaps they simply forgot about the first level, or "bottom shelf" NGOs, and referred mainly to trade unions and parties (the second level, better-organized NGOs).

**Figure 39. Membership in Non-Governmental Organizations<sup>44</sup>**

<b>(n=1012)</b>	
Trade unions	22%
Organizations in the workplace	14%
Political organizations	2%
Women's organizations	1%
Religious organizations	1%
Veteran's organizations	1%
Sporting Organizations	1%
Other	2%
None	41%
Don't know	5%
Refused/NA	12%

Forty-one percent say they do not belong to the above-mentioned organizations. It is possible they belong to some others, but they did not mention them. Overall, excluding membership in trade unions, approximately 22 percent report membership in some voluntary nongovernmental organizations. However, none of the organizations mentioned is very influential or very popular. At the same time, people may respect some NGOs and give them a high evaluation.

It is difficult to separate the evaluation of the current NGOs that are not influential and the attitudes toward NGOs in general. However, the next question demonstrates that Belarusians understand the importance of NGOs. When asked about the importance of nongovernmental organizations in society, almost half of the respondents believe NGOs are important.

In general, 46 percent think NGOs are important, and 13 percent think they are very important. Fifteen percent say NGOs are not very important, and only 8 percent say they are not important at all. Almost 30 percent did not answer or say they do not know how to answer. In practical terms, the data show that in the eyes of respondents there are few NGOs that can be relied upon further to promote civil society.

<sup>44</sup> Are you [or your husband/wife] a member of any of the following organizations ON THIS LIST?



## Mass Media

In a democratic society, the mass media plays an important role by providing citizens with the information necessary to make decisions on political, economic, and other issues. In Belarus there is a wide spectrum of media sources: Belarusian TV, radio and newspapers, as well as many Russian TV programs, radio stations and newspapers. However, as the survey data show, the media do not function properly, because the majority of the people report that they do not have enough information regarding such important topics as politics, economics, and elections. As already shown, the respondents have a low opinion of the media's ability to inform the public on politics and economics, to explain the voting process, or to motivate Belarusians to vote.

The low evaluation of the media can be explained by many factors. First, it is necessary to start by considering the availability of different media sources. There are many independent local newspapers in Belarus with very small circulations (fewer than 200 copies, but sometimes as many as 500 copies). As for independent national newspapers, many of them have been closed, and only a few are known nationwide. It is even more difficult for people in small towns and villages to get these newspapers. Thus, a majority relies on strictly controlled state-sponsored newspapers. There are many small independent TV stations as well, but they appear to be not very influential. Radio stations are better known and more available. For this reason, it would be easy to increase the use of radio stations for political campaigns and other political events.

The task was to get a picture of how Belarusians use media sources. There were some questions designed to assess the level of public awareness about current media sources. IFES investigated whether people turn to these sources for information (whether they listen, watch, or read them), and whether they rely on them, and trust their objectivity. These three components (knowledge about media sources, use of these sources, and opinions of their objectivity) give a general picture of how Belarusians rely on the mass media in political matters.

### Media Familiarity

The respondents received a detailed list of sixty-four media sources in Belarus and were asked to name those they recognize. Overall, Belarusians demonstrate a high level of knowledge of Belarusian and Russian TV, some Belarusian radio stations, and some Belarusian and Russian newspapers.

Belarusian TV stations, in general, are well known. However, only the main station, BT, is nationally known. Ninety-six percent of the respondents mention BT. BT-8 is recognized by 26 percent. Of the regional Belarusian TV stations, only Bug-TV (6 percent), NIREA (8 percent), and 2<sup>nd</sup> Channel (5 percent) are recognized by a sizable percentage of the respondents [Figure 40].

Russian TV stations, however, are the most well known sources among Belarusians. ORT TV is recognized by 98 percent, NTV, 66 percent, RTR, 84 percent, Culture, 56 percent, TV-6, 28 percent, and TV-Center, 15 percent. In other words, Russian TV is more recognized and much more influential in Belarus than domestic stations are. Thus, many Russian TV ads and political programs are well known in Belarus and potentially influential among the people.

Belarusian radio stations are also well known among the respondents. There are more radio stations in Belarus than there are local TV stations. Thus, Belarusian radio stations are among the most important sources of information. As has already been mentioned, many people say they listen to Radio Point (36 percent) and Ultra Short Wave/FM (31 percent). It is necessary to note that many radio stations do not focus on politics. Relatively few do not have a radio (5 percent) or do not listen to it (8 percent).

Among the various radio stations, the best known are Bel Radio (69 percent mention this source), Radio Majak (40 percent mention it), and several others are also known by a reasonable percentage. Of the foreign stations, the BBC is mentioned by 16 percent, Radio Liberty by 20 percent, and Voice of America by 19 percent of the respondents.

The most widely known Belarusian newspapers mentioned in the survey are those under state control and therefore state-funded. They include *Sovetskaya Belorussia* (57 percent), *Respublika* (43 percent), and *Narodnaya Gazeta* (51 percent). Many of the others are also known by sizable percentages of the populations. However, the Russian newspapers are also fairly well known and influential. Of these, *Argumenty i Fauty* (54 percent), *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (49 percent), and *Izvestia* (41 percent) are the best known.

### **Main Media Sources**

Respondents were also asked which media source they rely on the most. Figure 40 details their main sources of information on TV, radio, and in newspapers, and also lists their sources' objectivity as rated by the survey respondents.

Figure 40. Main Media Sources and Their Perceived Objectivity<sup>45</sup>

	% Citing as Main Media Source	Is Media Source Objective?			
		Yes	Somewhat	No	DK
<b>TV</b>					
ORT	83%	44%	26%	11%	19%
BT	67%	36%	19%	21%	24%
RTR	55%	33%	26%	11%	30%
NTV	41%	38%	21%	9%	33%
Culture	13%	14%	13%	7%	66%
BT-8	7%	14%	12%	16%	58%
<b>Radio</b>					
Bel Radio	45%	40%	15%	15%	30%
Radio Majak	14%	27%	13%	5%	54%
Radio BA	11%	36%	14%	8%	42%
Radio Rocks	11%	28%	14%	7%	50%
Radio Liberty	14%	25%	8%	7%	60%
Voice of America	3%	16%	10%	7%	66%
BBC	3%	13%	7%	4%	75%
<b>Newspapers</b>					
Sovetskaya Belorussia	28%	32%	17%	11%	40%
Argumenty i Fakty	24%	35%	16%	5%	44%
Komsomolskaya Pravda	20%	27%	17%	7%	50%
Narodnaya Gazeta	18%	20%	16%	11%	53%
Local Newspapers	17%	46%	19%	9%	27%
Izvestia	11%	12%	8%	3%	47%
Narodnaya Volya	10%	24%	12%	9%	55%

### TV is the Main Source for Belarusians

The main findings:

- The most well known TV channels are Russian. ORT is the most popular and most reliable TV source of information (and the main media source in general) among Belarusians.
- Although two-thirds of Belarusians say BT is their main source of information, over one-fourth of them do not trust BT, saying it is not objective. Only one in ten Belarusians says the same about any Russian TV channel.
- Belarusians do not rely on local TV channels for serious news or election information. These stations need to make some major changes before they become influential among the people.

<sup>45</sup> Which of these that you know about, are your main sources of information about government and politics? Now I'm going to ask about your views on the way our mass media report the news about political events. Of those that you know about, please tell me whether you describe its news coverage as objective or not?

- Important developments in the news may come to Belarusians through Russian TV channels rather than through their own Belarusian TV channels.
- As long as ORT is available for free in Belarus, it will remain the main source of information for the Belarusian people.

The audience of Belarusian TV:

- People age 45 and older more often watch BT than do members of the younger groups.
- There is no difference between the percentages of men and women who mention BT as their main source of information.
- People 55 and older evaluate BT as objective two times more often than do people aged 18-44. One in three young Belarusians aged 18-24 says BT is not objective, while only one in ten aged 65 and older says BT is not objective.
- Socioeconomic status directly correlates with the evaluation of BT's objectivity: the lower the economic level, the more the people say BT is objective.
- Gomel and Mogilev oblasts have higher percentages of people citing BT as their main source than do the other regions.
- People in Miensk city, and in Miensk and Brest oblasts more often say BT is not objective.

The ORT audience:

- Among those who watch ORT and who are thus in a position to assess its objectivity, no significant differences in age, ethnicity, or economic status are observed.

The NTV audience (NTV is not available in rural areas):

- An overwhelming majority of the NTV audience is people age 18-54 (two-thirds of the NTV audience in Belarus). NTV is the main source for people age 35-44.
- People 55 and older say NTV is objective less frequently than do other groups.
- People of high economic status more often say NTV is objective.
- In the regions, a majority of the NTV audience live in Miensk and other big cities.
- People in Mogilev and Vitebsk oblasts say NTV is objective less often than do people in Miensk city and Miensk Oblast.
- Those who support a market economy evaluate NTV as more objective than do other people.

The RTR audience:

- There are more people age 18-54 among the RTR audience than there are older people.
- More Russians say RTR is their main source, although the evaluation of RTR's objectivity is the same among all ethnic groups.
- People of different economic levels evaluate RTR on the same level.
- Residents of Miensk, big cities, and Miensk Oblast say RTR is their main source more often than other people do.
- People in Grodno, Vitebsk, Brest, and Gomel oblasts say RTR is objective less often than do people in Miensk and Mogilev oblasts.

## Radio

Radio sources are not as widely known as television sources. However, some local radio stations exist in the regions. The number of people who listen to these stations is relatively small. Nevertheless, these stations offer Belarusians a variety of media sources.

The most widely used radio source is Belarus Radio (both in Belarusian and Russian). Almost half the respondents say it is their main source of information. The objectivity rating of Bel Radio is much higher than that of BT. It is the most reliable radio source for Belarusians. The audience of Bel Radio includes people of all age groups, and both men and women are represented on an equal level. More Belarusians than Russians or people who speak both Russian and Belarusian say this source is objective. People 55 and older say this source is objective more often than younger groups. Another difference is the socioeconomic status of the listeners: the percentage of listeners from the low economic level is two times higher than the percent of people from the high economic level. People from the low economic level are twice as likely to say that Bel Radio is objective than are people from the high economic level.

The international media have a very small audience in Belarus. A majority of those who listen to foreign radio stations do not know whether they are objective. Radio Liberty (RL) is better known because it has a special program for Belarusians. As for Voice of America, it does not have a special program for Belarus, and therefore the level of interest in this station is lower than the interest in RL. The BBC's audience is even less certain whether their station is objective.

## Newspapers Are Not Influential

Print media are not as popular as they were during the Soviet days, when each family annually subscribed to three or four newspapers and journals. The situation is different now. Some people do not use print media at all, because of a lack of financial means or a lack of interest.

The main findings regarding newspapers are as follows:

- The most popular newspapers among Belarusians include both Belarusian and Russian papers, but for different reasons. Their audiences in Belarus are different.
- Independent Belarusian newspapers (*Narodnaya Volya*, *Belaruskaya Niva*) are not as widely available (their circulation is rather small). It appears the state attempts to control these papers to prevent them from influencing the people. Only 9 percent of respondents say these papers are their main source of information. Many independent newspapers are not well-known by people in rural regions.
- *Sovetskaya Belorussia* is funded by the state. Therefore, it is easily affordable by people of any economic level in any region. The most popular Russian newspapers, *Argumenty i F акты* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, are independent and not state-funded. They are expensive and not as widely available, especially in rural areas.
- *Argumenty i F акты* has the highest objectivity rating. As far as information sources go in the media, only ORT has a higher objectivity rating than *Argumenty i F акты*.

The audience of Sovetskaya Belorussia (SB):

- The majority of SB's audience is people aged 35 and older. Although this newspaper is equally well known by people aged 18-54, it is less well known by people 55 and older.
- More than half the readers of SB age 65 and older say it is objective, while only two in ten among the readers aged 18-34 say it is objective.
- People of the high economic level are three times less likely to feel that SB is objective than are people of the low economic level, although almost equal percentages of people in all economic groups name SB as their main source of information.
- SB is slightly more popular among ethnic Belarusians than among ethnic Russians, Poles, and those who speak both Russian and Belarusian.
- More people in Miensk and Gomel oblasts are familiar with SB and mention it as their main source of information, while significantly fewer people say the same in Brest and Vitebsk oblasts.
- The readers of SB in Miensk city are more critical: only two in ten say SB is objective.
- As predicted, readers who say SB is objective are stronger supporters of a planned economy than of a market economy.

The audience of Argumenty i Fauty (AiF):

- Two-thirds are people 18-54
- People of the high economic level mention this source two times more often than people of the low economic level, although people of all economic levels say AiF is their main source of information.
- People age 18-24 are more likely to say AiF is objective, and people ages 65 and older are more likely to say AiF is not objective.
- AiF is better known in Miensk city and Miensk, Brest, and Gomel oblasts than elsewhere.
- More people in Miensk Oblast and in cities and towns say AiF is their main source of information than do citizens of Miensk, Oblast capitals, and villages.
- Readers in Grodno and Mogilev oblasts say AiF is not objective more frequently than do residents of any other region.

It is important to note that for all the sources of information, a large portion of those who cite a particular media source as their main source of information cannot evaluate whether it is objective, or they give no answer. The exceptions are only the well-known TV channels, local newspapers, and some radio stations (Bel Radio most of all). Thus, the public feels poorly served by the media available to them. This appears to be a result of the fact that the most important source of information in Belarus is a foreign news station, ORT. Indirectly, this means that Belarus's domestic media are seen as less interesting and less objective. Practically speaking, Russian broadcasters can influence Belarusian audiences, especially through the channel ORT.

## Differences between Regions

General differences among regions in Belarus are noticeable in the survey data. Unlike Ukraine, it is impossible to divide Belarus into West-East, because supporters of the new democratic reforms as well as their opponents live in all regions. However, some regions seem to be more conservative (more oriented to the Soviet past, state controlled economy, political restrictions, state property, and even the union with Russia), and some regions seem to be more open to change (favoring the free market, liberal freedoms, political pluralism).

In general, Mogilev, Vitebsk, and Gomel are more conservative regarding economic and political changes than are the other oblasts. Brest emerged more uncommitted than the other oblasts, with more people unsure about leaning toward the current order or toward change, and fewer committed to either position. Miensk respondents indicate they are moving away from Russia and feel relatively more isolated. Grodno, though not to a statistically significant degree, shows this tendency as well.

There are some significant differences among the oblasts on particular issues such as human rights. Brest and Vitebsk residents demonstrate lower levels of interest in human rights. Those oblasts have a higher percentage of people who answer "don't know" or do not answer. In the Grodno and Miensk oblasts more people seem to be committed to human rights. Gomel has more people who do not care about human rights than average. People in Mogilev have no specific opinions on this issue.

Regarding the union with Russia and Belarus' international isolation, Miensk Oblast is unique in having many more people who oppose the union and who say that Belarus is isolated, and who say that isolation creates problems. Vitebsk and Gomel demonstrate the other side of the scale: a majority there supports the union with Russia and does not feel that Belarus is isolated. In the Mogilev and Gomel oblasts, more people than average did not answer.

A majority of market supporters are from Miensk and Grodno oblasts. Vitebsk is on the opposite end of this scale: people in this oblast strongly support a state-controlled economy. More people in Miensk and Gomel seem to be uncommitted.

A majority of those who support the status quo in Belarus are from either the Mogilev or Vitebsk oblasts, while a majority of the opponents of the regime are from the Miensk Oblast. People from Grodno and Brest do not have particular opinions on this issue.

In addition to regional differences, there is also a clear difference between rural and urban residents. Respondents from the villages are much less committed toward political openness and much less likely to believe Belarus is isolated. Those in the villages are much more committed to the present political alignment of Belarus and, on the average, are less involved in political affairs.

Minsk city is the center of democratic initiatives in Belarus. The residents of the capital differ greatly from the rest of the population in practically all matters. They have more interest in political matters (21 percent are very interested and 46 percent are somewhat interested versus national averages of 16 percent and 40 percent, respectively). Sixty-two percent of the population supports the Belarus-Russia union (versus 67 percent nationally) and 32 percent are against it (24 percent nationally). Forty-seven percent of the residents of Minsk city say that Belarus is isolated; 15 percent, partly isolated; and 31 percent, not isolated (versus national averages of 28 percent, 19 percent and 32 percent, respectively). Only 41 percent of the citizens of Minsk would vote for Lukashenko in the 2001 presidential elections, and 43 percent would not vote for him (compared with 56 percent and 25 percent nationally). One in four approves of the May 1999 opposition elections (versus one in five nationally). The level of confidence in social institutions--especially the government, local administrations, the Lukashenko-supported Parliament, and Lukashenko's administration, courts, state security, and the militia (police)--is lower in Minsk city than the national average. Almost three in ten say that political parties are necessary in Belarus (versus one in ten nationally), and four in ten strongly believe that two parties are needed (versus the national average of 25 percent). People in Minsk city have more information on political (50 percent versus 40 percent nationally) and economic (74 percent versus 31 percent nationally) matters.

Only 58 percent of the residents of Minsk city took part in April local elections (versus 71 percent nationally), and 62 percent say they did not have enough information about the candidates to make an informed decision (versus the national average of 51 percent). Generally, their perceptions of the April elections are not as positive as the national averages, while 87 percent say that regular and honest elections are important to them (67 percent say they are very important). In Minsk city, 54 percent say NGOs are important (versus an average of 46 percent).

However, Minsk city has more supporters of a state-controlled economy than of a free-market economy (38 percent and 27 percent, respectively, with 23 percent in between). Even in Minsk city, 20 percent of the respondents report that they are poor; 54 percent, modest; and only 21 percent, moderate and 3 percent, above average (versus 25 percent, 49 percent, 23 percent and 1 percent, respectively, nationwide). One can see that this difference is too small to have a significant impact on economic issues. These figures show that a market economy is much less popular now among the people of Belarus than is a state-controlled economy. However, in Russia, the free market is associated with wild capitalism rather than with the civilized market in G-7 countries. Realistically speaking, people in Belarus are afraid that a market economy will bring delays in the payments of wages and pensions and will provide no benefits. Perhaps closer relations with economically advanced countries and more foreign and joint enterprises in Belarus will change people's opinions about market reform.

The most significant difference between citizens of Minsk and those of Belarus in general was respondents' level of education. The differences are readily apparent: half of the population of Minsk has at least some university education, while only 23 percent of the Belarusian population in general has a university education. Half of Belarus' students are in Minsk, and



almost 2 percent of the residents say they have scientific degrees (compared with 0.4 percent in Belarus as a whole).

Practically speaking, this division of the population according to education shows that any further investment in the system of higher education may increase the support base for reform even more than simply increasing assistance to the many small non-governmental organizations in the country. This does not mean that NGOs do not deserve increased support. Rather, the support must be balanced with support for education. People only develop the interests that can be usefully cultivated by NGOs through a greater exposure to information and the development of the skills with which to use it. In a rural or urban setting, knowledge is an essential precursor for the empowerment of citizens in an effort to assume responsibility for their future.

## **A**DDITIONAL NOTES

Generally, there are three main systems that can keep order in society by providing people with common rules and beliefs: (a) religious or moral norms; (b) traditions and laws; and (c) strong (usually armed) power. After the breakdown of communism, all the previous (communist) moral norms were thrown away, leaving no common system of moral values shared by the majority of the population in these countries. After witnessing the historic failure of their traditions, first with the end of the czarist regime and then with the fall of communism, people in the FSU nations no longer trust tradition. Law enforcement does not exist, but it did not exist under communism either. Instead, “telephonic power” exists— any person in office can call another institution and dictate his or her personal will. Therefore, although laws exist, the “phone power” and personal networking are stronger than any laws. During the entire communist period, the government declared religion illusory and “wrong”; only recently have some accepted religion as a valid moral system. In addition, many in Belarus are afraid of Western democracy, which they associate with anarchy. Consequently, they prefer any strong power or powerful institutions, because these institutions can provide order and some kind of security (i.e., protection from organized crime and common criminals). This is a typical approach for evaluating institutions in post-Soviet societies.

In Western democracies, however, the system of law and moral, especially religious, beliefs is quite strong, so these countries do not need a system of strong centralized power. The police and the army are under the control of the law, which limits even the President’s powers. In Belarus it is clear that the President can change the law and even the Constitution; he can dismiss any official and disband Parliament. In a country where there is no respect for moral traditions and law enforcement, a highly centralized form of government, where commands are issued from the top down, is to be expected. As long as there is no respect for moral or religious norms and no real legal system, democracy cannot be respected more than centralized power.

Furthermore, it is clear that the high regard for religion discloses a desire to have a strong value system, approved from above (from the heavens or high-ranking officials) regardless of what that value system is.

Belarusians will respect a strong system of law enforcement. In addition, the high rankings received by the State Security during the NATO bombing of Kosovo illustrate that the common people have felt threatened by what they observed in the Russian media. For instance, antiwar and anti-American propaganda may have motivated some to side with the State Security in the hopes that they would protect the country from a NATO invasion. The army was selected because it has retained a positive image as the “country’s defender” even in the post-Soviet era. In addition, the army is considered to be outside the sphere of politics, thus giving it credibility among people from a variety of political orientations. This lack of political association was not true for the State Security. Individuals who support the State Security usually support the status quo of the current regime.

Overall, social institutions' ratings are significantly low. In general, Belarusians do not rate social institutions very highly. Rather, the institutions are rated cautiously by respondents. Except the first four institutions, a high level of confidence is measured by a single digit. However, none of the institutions is rated very low. In total, the index of half of the institutions is close to zero. This means that almost an equal number of people trust institutions as do not trust them. These findings suggest a split in the opinions of Belarus' society. Few take extreme positions for or against institutions. In addition, the number of those who somewhat favor a position nearly equals the number of those who somewhat disfavor that position. A likely explanation is that people fear the consequences of criticizing social institutions.

People are more reluctant to evaluate some institutions. One third of the respondents do not evaluate the Parliament (National Assembly). This is probably because people do not have much information about this major legislative body of the country. This contrasts with both Russia and Ukraine, where a majority is always ready to evaluate parliament's performance. The main reason for this low level of information about the Belarusian National Assembly is that this body plays no real role in the political life of the country. Since the disbanding of the previous Parliament (the Thirteenth Supreme Soviet), the media has been unable to find out how the new Parliament really functions. As people lost access to information about the Parliament, they also lost interest in the Parliament. Approximately 40 new deputies were appointed to replace those who did not recognize the new version of the Constitution adopted after the November 1996 referendum. The low rating of the Belarusian Parliament discloses the fact that people are aware that this body does not have any real power.



## **Appendix I: Topline Data**

All percentages based on n=1012 unless otherwise indicated



- 
1. How interested are you in matters of politics are you very interested, somewhat interested, not too interested, or not at all interested?
- |                       |             |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Very Interested       | 15%         |
| Somewhat Interested   | 40%         |
| Not Too Interested    | 25%         |
| Not At All Interested | 18%         |
| Don't Know            | 2%          |
| Refused/NA            | *           |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>100%</b> |
2. Are you generally satisfied or dissatisfied with the situation in Belarus, at this time -- would you say you are very satisfied, fairly satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?
- |                       |             |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Very Satisfied        | 5%          |
| Fairly Satisfied      | 21%         |
| Somewhat Dissatisfied | 40%         |
| Very Dissatisfied     | 27%         |
| Don't Know            | 6%          |
| Refused/NA            | 1%          |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>100%</b> |
3. **[If Very or Fairly Dissatisfied in Q2]** Please tell me some of the reasons why you said you are dissatisfied with the situation in Belarus today?
- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| Economic trouble (general)                 | 17% |
| Inflation                                  | 22% |
| Falling standard of living, impoverishment | 13% |
| Scarcity of goods                          | 3%  |
| Unemployment, jobs                         | 2%  |
| Dissatisfaction with govt. policies        | 2%  |
| Civil disorder, lawlessness, corruption    | 2%  |
| No democracy                               | 1%  |
| Dissatisfaction with Lukashenko            | 1%  |
| Other                                      | 1%  |
4. Think about our economic future, how should it develop: free from state control, [ROTATE] under strict control of the state? Now you see the scale where 1 means that the economy must be free from state control, and 7 means that the economy should be under the strict control of the state. Mark on the scale how you think the economy of Belarus should develop.
- |                             |             |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| 1 - Free from state control | 6%          |
| 2                           | 7%          |
| 3                           | 10%         |
| 4                           | 19%         |
| 5                           | 11%         |
| 6                           | 11%         |
| 7 - Strict control of state | 19%         |
| Don't Know                  | 15%         |
| Refused/NA                  | 2%          |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>100%</b> |

5. Thinking of the President, the government, the National Assembly [Parliament], local Soviets, local administrations, and the courts. Which of these, in your opinion, is the most likely to resolve the economic problems **FACING BELARUS** in the next year? (ACCEPT VOLUNTEERED RESPONSE NONE)

President	40%
Government	17%
National Assembly	3%
Local Soviets	3%
Local administration	2%
Courts	*
None	15%
Don't know	20%
Refused/NA	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>

- 6a. In your opinion will the economic situation in Belarus in a year be better than ~~str~~now, remain the same, or get worse?

Better	19%
Same	25%
Worse	37%
Don't know	19%
Refused/NA	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>

- 6b. In your opinion will the financial situation of you and your family living with you be better in one year than it is now, remain the same, or get worse?

Better	15%
Same	28%
Worse	35%
Don't know	21%
Refused/NA	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

7. In your opinion, does the composition of Local Soviet reflect the population's political preferences overall?

Yes, Strongly	4%
Yes, Somewhat	18%
No, Somewhat	24%
No, Strongly	21%
Don't know	31%
NA	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>



8. Do you think that the Local Soviet elected in April 1999 will be [ROTATE] more effective than the last Soviet in addressing the problems facing your community, less effective, or about the same as the last Soviet?
- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| More Effective                             | 12%          |
| Less Effective                             | 7%           |
| Same                                       | 52%          |
| Can't assess, elections did not take place | 2%           |
| Don't Know                                 | 26%          |
| Refused/NA                                 | 2%           |
| <b>Total</b>                               | <b>101%✓</b> |
9. Do you think that Belarus has become isolated from the world community?
- |                         |             |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| Yes                     | 28%         |
| No                      | 32%         |
| Partially [VOLUNTEERED] | 19%         |
| Don't know              | 20%         |
| Refused/NA              | 1%          |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>100%</b> |
10. [If "Yes" or "Partially" in Q9] Do you think this isolation creates problems for Belarus?
- |                 |             |
|-----------------|-------------|
| Yes, definitely | 26%         |
| Yes, somewhat   | 15%         |
| No, somewhat    | 2%          |
| No, definitely  | 1%          |
| Not Asked       | 53%         |
| Don't Know      | 2%          |
| Refused/NA      | 1%          |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>100%</b> |
11. On April 2, 1997, an agreement was signed on the union of Belarus and Russia. What is your personal opinion toward the formation of this union?
- |                         |             |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| Strongly support        | 35%         |
| Somewhat support        | 32%         |
| Somewhat do not support | 13%         |
| Strongly do not support | 11%         |
| Don't Know              | 7%          |
| Refused/NA              | 2%          |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>100%</b> |
- 12a. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Government officials act first of all in the interest of Belarus? [WAIT FOR THE ANSWER, THEN ASK] Do you agree completely, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree completely?
- |                                      |              |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| Agree Completely                     | 4%           |
| Agree Somewhat                       | 12%          |
| Disagree Somewhat                    | 35%          |
| Disagree Completely                  | 33%          |
| Neither Agree/Disagree [VOLUNTEERED] | 3%           |
| Don't Know                           | 14%          |
| Refused/NA                           | 1%           |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>102%✓</b> |

- 
- 12b. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Government is doing the best it can to protect the health of the Belarusian people? ? [WAIT FOR THE ANSWER, THEN ASK] Do you agree completely, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree completely?
- |                                      |             |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| Agree Completely                     | 7%          |
| Agree Somewhat                       | 24%         |
| Disagree Somewhat                    | 33%         |
| Disagree Completely                  | 26%         |
| Neither Agree/Disagree [VOLUNTEERED] | 3%          |
| Don't Know                           | 6%          |
| Refused/NA                           | φ           |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>99%✓</b> |
13. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Fellow citizens act in the interest of the society. [WAIT FOR THE ANSWER, THEN ASK] Do you agree completely, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree completely?
- |                                      |             |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| Agree Completely                     | 5%          |
| Agree Somewhat                       | 19%         |
| Disagree Somewhat                    | 34%         |
| Disagree Completely                  | 14%         |
| Neither Agree/Disagree [VOLUNTEERED] | 4%          |
| Don't Know                           | 22%         |
| Refused/NA                           | 2%          |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>100%</b> |
14. How likely are you to vote in the 2001 election for President?
- |                          |              |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| Certain to vote          | 54%          |
| Likely                   | 21%          |
| Perhaps yes, perhaps no  | 9%           |
| Not Likely               | 4%           |
| Definitely will not vote | 4%           |
| Don't Know               | 8%           |
| Refused/NA               | 1%           |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>101%✓</b> |
15. In general, would you say that A.G. Lukashenko has done his job as President well enough to be re-elected for the next period?
- |                         |              |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Re-elect, Strongly      | 26%          |
| Re-elect, Not Strongly  | 31%          |
| Perhaps yes, perhaps no | 9%           |
| No, not strongly        | 13%          |
| Definitely not          | 12%          |
| Don't Know              | 8%           |
| Refused/NA              | 3%           |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>102%✓</b> |

16. Promise to solve which problem, given by a candidate for President, will be decisive for you in choosing the President of the RB in 2001? (Open-ended)
- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| Solve economic problems                | 28% |
| Raise standard of living               | 19% |
| Stop inflation                         | 8%  |
| Solve social problems                  | 8%  |
| End crisis (general mention)           | 5%  |
| Restore law and order                  | 4%  |
| Make a better future (general mention) | 2%  |
| Provide jobs                           | 2%  |
| Bring democracy                        | 2%  |
| Improve health care                    | 2%  |
| Ensure rights/freedom                  | 1%  |
| Unification with Russia                | 1%  |
| Independence for Belarus               | 1%  |
| Other                                  | 5%  |
| Don't believe promises                 | 7%  |
| Don't know                             | 20% |
- 17A. Are you aware of the proposal to hold presidential elections in May 1999?
- |              |             |
|--------------|-------------|
| Yes          | 52%         |
| No           | 45%         |
| Refused/NA   | 2%          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>99%✓</b> |
- 17B. [IF 17A = Yes] Do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove or strongly disapprove of the proposal?
- |                                   |              |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Strongly Approve                  | 12%          |
| Somewhat Approve                  | 8%           |
| Somewhat Disapprove               | 9%           |
| Completely Disapprove             | 17%          |
| Neither Approve/Disapprove [VOL.] | 2%           |
| Not Asked                         | 48%          |
| Don't Know                        | 4%           |
| Refused/NA                        | 1%           |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>101%✓</b> |
18. I am now going to ask you about several governmental and non-governmental bodies and groups. For each, please tell me how much confidence you have in them: a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?
- A. Council of Ministers
- |                                   |             |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| A Great Deal                      | 8%          |
| A Fair Amount                     | 27%         |
| Not Very Much                     | 18%         |
| None at All                       | 13%         |
| I trust in some, partially [VOL.] | 7%          |
| Hard to Say                       | 24%         |
| Refused/No Answer                 | 3%          |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>100%</b> |

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B. Regional Administration	
A Great Deal	7%
A Fair Amount	28%
Not Very Much	20%
None at All	13%
I trust in some, partially [VOL.]	8%
Hard to Say	21%
Refused/No Answer	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>
C. Town, local administration	
A Great Deal	7%
A Fair Amount	26%
Not Very Much	22%
None at All	15%
I trust in some, partially [VOL.]	9%
Hard to Say	16%
Refused/No Answer	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>99%✓</b>
D. National Bank	
A Great Deal	7%
A Fair Amount	22%
Not Very Much	20%
None at All	18%
I trust in some, partially [VOL.]	6%
Hard to Say	23%
Refused/No Answer	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>
E. Commercial Banks	
A Great Deal	3%
A Fair Amount	13%
Not Very Much	21%
None at All	31%
I trust in some, partially [VOL.]	6%
Hard to Say	22%
Refused/No Answer	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>
F. Private Business	
A Great Deal	7%
A Fair Amount	20%
Not Very Much	18%
None at All	22%
I trust in some, partially [VOL.]	9%
Hard to Say	20%
Refused/No Answer	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>

---

G. Joint Belarusian/Foreign Business	
A Great Deal	9%
A Fair Amount	24%
Not Very Much	14%
None at All	13%
I trust in some, partially [VOL.]	7%
Hard to Say	28%
Refused/No Answer	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>
H. National Assembly (Parliament)	
A Great Deal	7%
A Fair Amount	21%
Not Very Much	14%
None at All	15%
I trust in some, partially [VOL.]	5%
Hard to Say	32%
Refused/No Answer	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>
I. Courts	
A Great Deal	9%
A Fair Amount	27%
Not Very Much	18%
None at All	17%
I trust in some, partially [VOL.]	8%
Hard to Say	16%
Refused/No Answer	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>99%✓</b>
J. Military Forces	
A Great Deal	22%
A Fair Amount	35%
Not Very Much	11%
None at All	9%
I trust in some, partially [VOL.]	6%
Hard to Say	15%
Refused/No Answer	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>
K. State Security Service	
A Great Deal	18%
A Fair Amount	28%
Not Very Much	12%
None at All	11%
I trust in some, partially [VOL.]	7%
Hard to Say	20%
Refused/No Answer	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>

L. President Lukashenko's Administration	
A Great Deal	22%
A Fair Amount	27%
Not Very Much	13%
None at All	15%
I trust in some, partially [VOL.]	6%
Hard to Say	14%
Refused/No Answer	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

M. Political Parties	
A Great Deal	4%
A Fair Amount	11%
Not Very Much	19%
None at All	28%
I trust in some, partially [VOL.]	7%
Hard to Say	23%
Refused/No Answer	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>99%✓</b>

N. Militia	
A Great Deal	10%
A Fair Amount	22%
Not Very Much	18%
None at All	26%
I trust in some, partially [VOL.]	8%
Hard to Say	12%
Refused/No Answer	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

O. Mass Media	
A Great Deal	9%
A Fair Amount	29%
Not Very Much	15%
None at All	14%
I trust in some, partially [VOL.]	17%
Hard to Say	12%
Refused/No Answer	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

19.	How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Voting gives people like me a chance to influence decisionmaking in our country. [WAIT FOR THE ANSWER, THEN ASK] Do you agree completely, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree completely?	
	Agree Completely	10%
	Agree Somewhat	24%
	Disagree Somewhat	28%
	Disagree Completely	23%
	Neither Agree/Disagree [VOL.]	3%
	Don't Know	12%
	Refused/NA	1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>

- 
20. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Sometimes politics are so complicated that people like me can't understand what's really happening. [WAIT FOR THE ANSWER, THEN ASK] Do you agree completely, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree completely?
- |                               |              |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Agree Completely              | 37%          |
| Agree Somewhat                | 36%          |
| Disagree Somewhat             | 12%          |
| Disagree Completely           | 5%           |
| Neither Agree/Disagree [VOL.] | 2%           |
| Don't Know                    | 8%           |
| Refused/NA                    | 1%           |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>101%✓</b> |
21. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: People like me have little or no influence on what's going on in Belarus. Do you agree completely, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree completely?
- |                               |             |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| Agree Completely              | 43%         |
| Agree Somewhat                | 34%         |
| Disagree Somewhat             | 11%         |
| Disagree Completely           | 4%          |
| Neither Agree/Disagree [VOL.] | 1%          |
| Don't Know                    | 6%          |
| Refused/NA                    | 1%          |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>100%</b> |
22. Do you believe that political parties are necessary in Belarus or not?
- |                             |             |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Necessary, Strongly         | 13%         |
| Necessary, Not Strongly     | 38%         |
| Not Necessary, Not Strongly | 13%         |
| Not Necessary, Strongly     | 17%         |
| Don't Know                  | 18%         |
| Refused/NA                  | 1%          |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>100%</b> |
23. How important do you think it is for Belarus to have at least two political parties competing in an election — very important, fairly important, not very important, or not at all important?
- |                      |             |
|----------------------|-------------|
| Very Important       | 24%         |
| Somewhat Important   | 34%         |
| Not Very Important   | 10%         |
| Not At All Important | 12%         |
| Don't Know           | 19%         |
| Refused/NA           | 1%          |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>100%</b> |

- 
24. Do you find that different political parties and blocs have distinct differences in how they solve problems that the republic is facing?
- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| Yes, Clear Differences                     | 34%          |
| There are differences, but not significant | 26%          |
| No, Not Clear Differences                  | 10%          |
| Don't Know                                 | 29%          |
| Refused/NA                                 | 2%           |
| <b>Total</b>                               | <b>101%✓</b> |
25. In general, how much information do you feel you have about political events in Belarus -- a great deal, fair amount, not very much, or none at all?
- |               |             |
|---------------|-------------|
| Great Deal    | 5%          |
| Fair Amount   | 35%         |
| Not Very Much | 40%         |
| None At All   | 13%         |
| Don't Know    | 6%          |
| Refused/NA    | 1%          |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>100%</b> |
26. Do you feel that you received enough information about the candidates to make an informed choice for the 1999 local elections?
- |                                  |             |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Yes                              | 14%         |
| Yes, Somewhat informed           | 19%         |
| No                               | 52%         |
| INAP: Did not vote (DO NOT READ) | 11%         |
| Don't Know                       | 3%          |
| Refused/NA                       | 1%          |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>100%</b> |
27. In general, how much information do you feel you have about economic developments in Belarus -- a great deal, fair amount, not very much, or none at all?
- |               |             |
|---------------|-------------|
| Great Deal    | 4%          |
| Fair Amount   | 26%         |
| Not Very Much | 46%         |
| None At All   | 15%         |
| Don't Know    | 6%          |
| Refused/NA    | 2%          |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>99%✓</b> |



PLEASE TURN TO PAGE #2. THERE IS A LIST OF MEDIA THAT IS AVAILABLE HERE IN BELARUS.

28a. PLEASE LOOK AT THE LIST. Which of the media on this page do you know about? [MARK ALL THAT THEY MENTION IN COLUMN 1, BELOW] *Only media mentioned by more than 5% listed*

BT	96%
2nd Channel	5%
BT-8	26%
ORT	98%
NTV	66%
RTR	84%
Culture	56%
TV-6	28%
TV-Center	15%
Other Russian TV	3%
Other Foreign	5%
Bel Radio	69%
Radio Krynitsa	12%
Radio BA	22%
Radio Rocks	27%
Radio Stalitsa	16%
Radio Style	9%
Radio Mir	12%
Radio Alfa	8%
Radio Majak	40%
Radio Liberty	20%
Voice of America	19%
BBC	16%
Other Radio	6%
Sovieskaia Belorussia	57%
Narodnaia Gazeta	51%
Zviazda	37%
Respublika	43%
Balaruskaia Niva	25%
Narodnaia Volia	26%
Naviny	14%
BDG	12%
Imia	2%
Svobodnyie Novosti	19%
Other Belarus Newspapers	5%
Other Belarus Local Newspapers	24%
Izvestia	41%
Pravda	37%
Nezavisimaia Gazeta	15%
Trud	40%
Komsomolskaia Pravda	50%
Moskovskij Komsomolets	18%
Argumenty I Fakty	55%
BUG-TV	6%
Articles	10%
Speeches	3%
Discussions	31%
Other	9%

28b. Which of these that you know about, are your main sources of information about government and politics? [MARK ALL THAT THEY MENTION IN TABLE 2, COLUMN 2 BELOW] *Only sources used by more than 3% are listed*

BT	67%
Other Belarussian TV	1%
BT-8	7%
ORT	83%
NTV	42%
RTR	55%
Culture	14%
TV-6	6%
TV-Center	3%
Other Foreign TV	2%
Bel Radio	45%
Radio Krynitsa	4%
Radio BA	11%
Radio Rocks	11%
Radio Stalitsa	6%
Radio Style	3%
Radio Mir	4%
Radio Alfa	3%
Radio Majak	14%
Radio Liberty	5%
Voice of America	3%
BBC	3%
Other Radio	4%
Sovietskaia Belorussia	28%
Narodnaia Gazeta	18%
Zviazda	9%
Respublika	16%
Belaruskaia Niva	9%
Narodnaia Volia	10%
Naviny	4%
BDG	4%
Imia	4%
Svobodnyie Novosti	5%
Other Belarussian Newspapers	4%
Other Belarussian Local Newspapers	17%
Izvestia	11%
Pravda	6%
Nezavisimaia Gazeta	4%
Trud	9%
Komsomolskaia Pravda	20%
Moskovskij Kmosomolets	3%
Argumenty I Fakty	24%
Articles	4%
Speeches	1%
Discussions	24%
Other	6%

29. PLEASE REFER AGAIN TO THE LIST ON PAGE #2 OF YOUR BOOKLET. Now I'm going to ask about your views on the way our mass media report the news about political events. Of those that you know about, please tell me whether you would describe its news coverage as objective or not objective. (Media Sources listed in 28b)

	Objective	Not Objective	Somewhat	DK/Not Known
BT	35%	20%	18%	18%
BT-8	3%	4%	3%	82%
ORT	43%	11%	26%	16%
NTV	25%	6%	14%	46%
RTR	27%	9%	22%	32%
Culture	8%	4%	7%	63%
TV-6	4%	1%	5%	82%
TV-Center	3%		5%	90%
Bel Radio	28%	10%	10%	42%
Radio Krynitsa	2%	1%	1%	93%
Radio BA	8%	2%	3%	84%
Radio Rocks	8%	2%	4%	80%
Radio Stalitsa	4%	2%	2%	89%
Radio Style	2%	1%	1%	94%
Radio Mir	4%	1%	1%	92%
Radio Alfa	2%	1%	1%	95%
Radio Majak	11%	2%	5%	73%
Radio Liberty	5%	2%	2%	87%
Voice of America	3%	1%	2%	89%
BBC	2%	1%	1%	90%
Sovietskaia Belorussia	18%	6%	10%	55%
Narodnaia Gazeta	10%	6%	8%	64%
Zviazda	5%	4%	5%	77%
Respublika	9%	5%	7%	71%
Balaruskaia Niva	5%	3%	4%	83%
Narodnaia Volia	6%	2%	3%	83%
Naviny	4%	2%	2%	89%
BDG	4%	1%	2%	91%
Imia	3%	1%	2%	91%
Svobodnyie Novosti	4%	1%	3%	86%
Izvestia	7%	2%	5%	75%
Pravda	4%	2%	4%	78%
Nezavisimaia Gazeta	3%	1%	1%	91%
Trud	7%	2%	5%	75%
Komsomolskaia Pravda	13%	3%	8%	64%
Moskovskij Komsomolets	2%	1%	2%	82%
Argumenty I Fakty	19%	3%	9%	57%
Articles	2%	1%	3%	92%
Discussions	9%	2%	11%	73%

30. How well informed were you regarding the process of voting?

Very well informed	18%
Somewhat well informed	40%
Not very well informed	20%
Not at all well informed	13%
Don't Know	7%
Refused/NA	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>

31a. PLEASE TURN TO PAGE #3 OF YOUR BOOKLET. What was your main source of information regarding the process of voting for the April 1999 elections? **[ACCEPT ONE RESPONSE ONLY]**

Television advertisements	15%
Television news programs	11%
Radio	10%
Newspapers	16%
Non-governmental organizations	*
Local polling station official	17%
Family members	5%
Friends or acquaintances	10%
Leaflet/poster	2%
Other	2%
Don't Know	7%
Refused/NA	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>

31b. On which waves do you most often listen to radio programs: ultra short, short wave, medium wave, long wave, or radio point? **[MARK ALL]**

Ultra short /FM	31%
Short wave /SH	*
Medium wave/AM	1%
Long wave /LM	1%
I listen to programs, but don't know which waves they're on	16%
Radio Point	36%
Do not listen to radio	8%
Do not have a radio	5%
Refused/NA	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>

32. What is your overall impression of how the April 1999 elections were organized? Were they:

Very well organized	15%
Somewhat well organized	37%
Not very well organized	14%
Not at all well organized	7%
Did not vote ( <i>DO NOT READ</i> )	13%
Don't Know	14%
Refused/NA	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>

33. In general, how much confidence do you have in the integrity of the members of election commissions ?

A great deal	12%
Some	32%
Not very much	18%
None	7%
Depends ( <i>DO NOT READ</i> )	3%
Don't Know	25%
Refused/NA	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

34. On the whole, how honest were the April 1999 elections in your opinion? Were they:
- |                        |              |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Completely honest      | 13%          |
| Mostly honest          | 34%          |
| Not very honest        | 13%          |
| Not at all fair honest | 4%           |
| Don't Know             | 35%          |
| Refused/NA             | 2%           |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>101%✓</b> |
35. Please refer to Page #4 of your booklet. You said that on the whole, the April 1999 elections were [RESPONSE GIVEN IN Q34]. Now, looking at the list on Page #4 [Who was most responsible/most to blame] for the elections being [RESPONSE GIVEN IN Q34] PLEASE REFER TO THE LIST ON THE PAGE.
- |                                 |              |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Central Election Commission     | 10%          |
| Constituency Election Officials | 4%           |
| Polling Station Officials       | 18%          |
| International Organizations     | *            |
| Observers                       | 2%           |
| Mafia (Organized Crime)         | 2%           |
| Private Business                | *            |
| Political Parties               | 1%           |
| Individual Candidates           | 3%           |
| Press (Mass Media)              | 3%           |
| NGOs                            | *            |
| National Assembly [Parliament]  | *            |
| President                       | 5%           |
| Council of Ministers            | 1%           |
| Courts                          | *            |
| Government                      | 1%           |
| Security Forces                 | *            |
| Other                           | 1%           |
| Don't Know                      | 38%          |
| Refused/NA                      | 12%          |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>101%✓</b> |
36. Did you vote in the April 4, 1999 local elections and if applicable, the April 16 second round of local elections or not?
- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| Yes, voted first round, no second round          | 47%          |
| Yes, voted first round, didn't vote second round | 7%           |
| Yes, voted Second only                           | 2%           |
| Yes, voted both rounds                           | <b>15%</b>   |
| No, did not vote either round                    | 28%          |
| Don't Recall                                     | *            |
| Refused/NA                                       | 2%           |
| <b>Total</b>                                     | <b>101%✓</b> |

37. (If 'Did not vote' in Q36) What is the main reason why you did not vote? (Open-ended)

Couldn't vote (sick, work, out of town)	13%
Not interested in voting	10%
Don't believe elections legitimate	6%
Lack of information about candidates	2%
Not satisfied with candidates/programs	2%
Other	1%
NA/DK	2%

38. (If Voted in Q36) What is the main reason why you took part? (Open-ended)

Civic duty	28%
Wish to improve country's future	7%
Used to voting	7%
To choose a deputy	7%
Agitation (election) campaign	2%
Want to participate	3%
Liked the candidate	3%
Compelled to vote	2%
Candidate promised to solve problems	1%
Trusted candidate	1%
Didn't want anybody to voted instead of me	1%
No particular reason	2%
Other	1%
Don't know	2%
No response	5%

39. (If Voted in Q36) Is the candidate you voted for affiliated with a political party?

Yes	5%
No	31%
Did not vote	30%
Don't Know	33%
Refused	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

40. (If 'Yes' in Q39) Please tell me the party this candidate is affiliated with.

Communist Party of Belarus	2%
Agrarian Party	1%
Other	1%
Don't know	★
Refused/NA	1%
Not Asked	95%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

- 
41. How well do you think the candidate for whom you voted reflects your own views and interests?
- |                     |             |
|---------------------|-------------|
| Very Well           | 5%          |
| Fairly Well         | 33%         |
| Not so Well         | 5%          |
| Not at All          | 1%          |
| <i>Did not vote</i> | 30%         |
| Don't Know          | 24%         |
| Refused/NA          | 3%          |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>101%</b> |
42. Was the candidate for whom you voted on the candidate ballot an incumbent deputy of the Regional Soviet or not?
- |                     |             |
|---------------------|-------------|
| Yes                 | 11%         |
| No                  | 27%         |
| Don't Know          | 30%         |
| Refused/NA          | 2%          |
| <i>Did not vote</i> | 30%         |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>100%</b> |
43. Which issue was the MOST important to you when making your decision to vote for [Candidate NAMED IN Q36]?
- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| Liked the candidate                        | 24% |
| Know the candidate personally              | 5%  |
| Necessary to vote for somebody             | 4%  |
| Well informed about candidate's activities | 4%  |
| Agitation (election) campaign              | 4%  |
| Friends, relatives recommended him/her     | 4%  |
| Candidate reflects my interests            | 3%  |
| Executed my civic duty                     | 3%  |
| Hope for better future                     | 2%  |
| I did as everybody                         | 1%  |
| Voted against all candidates               | 1%  |
| I was compelled                            | 1%  |
| Intuition                                  | 1%  |
| Other                                      | 1%  |
| Don't know                                 | 8%  |
| No response                                | 11% |

- 
44. PLEASE TURN TO PAGE #5 .What was the medium of information that was most influential in convincing you to vote for [Candidacy NAMEDN Q36]? **ACCEPT ONE RESPONSE ONLY**
- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| Television advertisement                           | 4%           |
| Radio report                                       | 2%           |
| Newspaper article                                  | 6%           |
| Magazine article                                   | *            |
| Leaflet with candidate literature                  | 18%          |
| Personal contact with representative or candidate  | 7%           |
| Voters' meeting with candidates or representatives | 6%           |
| Candidate platform                                 | 5%           |
| Opinion of friend                                  | 4%           |
| Opinion of family member                           | 7%           |
| Opinion of other                                   | 1%           |
| Other  | 4%           |
| INAP: Did not vote                                 | 30%          |
| DON'T KNOW   | 3%           |
| Refused/NA   | 4%           |
| <b>Total</b>                                       | <b>101%✓</b> |
45. Which of the following best describes what happened when you went to vote on April 4, 1999?
- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Your name was already on the voter registry at the one polling station you visited  | 66%          |
| Your name was placed on the registry after you presented your identification [passport]   | 3%           |
| You were prohibited from voting at one polling station, but sent to another where your name was on the registry and you voted there | *            |
| Other   | *            |
| Did not vote  | 30%          |
| Don't Know  | 1%           |
| Refused/NA  | 1%           |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>101%✓</b> |
46. Was your personal information correct on the voter registry when you voted?
- |              |              |
|--------------|--------------|
| Yes          | 66%          |
| No           | 2%           |
| Did not vote | 30%          |
| Don't Know   | 2%           |
| Refused/NA   | 1%           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>101%✓</b> |



- 
47. What were the greatest problems you encountered in voting on April 4, 1999, if any?
- |                                      |     |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Lack of information about candidates | 1%  |
| Vote registeries were incorrect      | 1%  |
| Wanted to vote, not allowed          | 1%  |
| Other                                | 1%  |
| No problems noticed                  | 62% |
| Don't know                           | 1%  |
| No response                          | 3%  |
48. Did you personally witness any type of violation of the election law on election day, April 4, 1999?
- |              |             |
|--------------|-------------|
| Yes          | 3%          |
| No           | 64%         |
| Did not vote | 30%         |
| Don't Know   | 1%          |
| Refused/NA   | 2%          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>100%</b> |
49. Please turn to Page #6 of your booklet. Looking at the list on this page, please tell me what type of violation of the election law did you observe **ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES**
- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| Poll watchers at the voting place tried to tell voters to vote for certain candidates or parties | *            |
| Secrecy of voting was not followed and that someone could know how I voted                       | *            |
| People were being allowed to vote for family members   | 2%           |
| People were allowed to vote without appropriate documentation                                    | 1%           |
| Other  | 1%           |
| <i>Not asked</i>   | 97%          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>101%✓</b> |
51. In your opinion, are military personnel compelled by their superiors to vote for certain candidates or parties or do they exercise free choice in voting?
- |                       |             |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Compelled to vote     | 26%         |
| Free Choice           | 19%         |
| Depends (VOLUNTEERED) | 8%          |
| Don't Know            | 46%         |
| Refused/NA            | 1%          |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>100%</b> |
52. (If 'Compelled to vote' or 'Depends' in Q51) In your opinion, how much of an impact does this have on the outcome of elections?
- |                    |             |
|--------------------|-------------|
| Great Impact       | 8%          |
| Substantial Impact | 14%         |
| Not much impact    | 8%          |
| No Impact          | 1%          |
| <i>Not asked</i>   | 66%         |
| Don't Know         | 3%          |
| Refused/NA         | *           |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>100%</b> |

53. As you may recall, there was a referendum proposed in November of 1996, which altered the Belarusian Constitution. Did you take part in the November 1996 referendum?
- |                           |             |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| Yes                       | 60%         |
| No                        | 19%         |
| Don't Know/Don't Remember | 18%         |
| Refused/NA                | 3%          |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>100%</b> |
54. Thinking now about the Belarusian Constitution...How much information do you have about your rights as a citizen under the Constitution of Belarus?
- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| A great deal  | 7%           |
| Some          | 31%          |
| Not very much | 29%          |
| None at all   | 27%          |
| Don't Know    | 5%           |
| Refused/NA    | 2%           |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>101%✓</b> |
55. How familiar are you with the contents of the Constitution of Belarus?
- |                           |              |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Yes, I am very familiar   | 8%           |
| More know than don't      | 21%          |
| More don't know than know | 38%          |
| Not at all familiar       | 29%          |
| DK                        | 4%           |
| Refused/NA                | 1%           |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>101%✓</b> |

56. How important is it to you that the following rights be respected in the country where you live: it very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?

1. One can choose from several parties and candidates when voting

Very Important	43%
Somewhat Important	25%
Not Very Important	12%
Not At All Important	5%
Hard to Say	12%
Refused/NA	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

2. Honest elections are held regularly

Very Important	57%
Somewhat Important	24%
Not Very Important	5%
Not At All Important	2%
Hard to Say	10%
Refused/NA	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>

3. The rights of minority ethnic groups are protected

Very Important	45%
Somewhat Important	31%
Not Very Important	8%
Not At All Important	2%
Hard to Say	9%
Refused/NA	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>

4. The private property of individuals is protected by law

Very Important	71%
Somewhat Important	18%
Not Very Important	2%
Not At All Important	1%
Hard to Say	5%
Refused/NA	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

5. Citizens have the right to form political parties

Very Important	31%
Somewhat Important	25%
Not Very Important	19%
Not At All Important	9%
Hard to Say	12%
Refused/NA	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

6. The right to publicly criticize the government is protected

Very Important	44%
Somewhat Important	23%
Not Very Important	11%
Not At All Important	5%
Hard to Say	13%
Refused/NA	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

7. All can freely practice the religion of one's choice

Very Important	61%
Somewhat Important	25%
Not Very Important	5%
Not At All Important	1%
Hard to Say	4%
Refused/NA	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>99%✓</b>

8. All can form associations or union without any government involvement

Very Important	31%
Somewhat Important	26%
Not Very Important	12%
Not At All Important	9%
Hard to Say	18%
Refused/NA	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

57. What does the phrase, "The private property of individuals is protected by law" mean to you? (Open-ended, multiple response allowed)
- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| Can't take away things that belong to me           | 26% |
| Citizens' property is protected by law             | 19% |
| Just empty words                                   | 5%  |
| We don't have private property                     | 3%  |
| Everyone manages his/her property in way they want | 2%  |
| Protection of proprietor's rights                  | 2%  |
| Protection from arbitrariness of state             | 2%  |
| Confidence in own safety                           | 2%  |
| Fairness   | 1%  |
| Absence of racket, fight with crime                | 1%  |
| Other  | 6%  |
| Don't know   | 25% |
| No response  | 13% |
58. Would you say that Belarus is a democratic country, or is it not a democratic country?
- |                                  |             |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Belarus is a democracy           | 29%         |
| Belarus is not a democracy       | 26%         |
| Both, In between, Neither [VOL.] | 21%         |
| Don't Know                       | 20%         |
| Refused/NA                       | 4%          |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>100%</b> |
59. What does it mean to you to live in a democratic country? (Open-ended, multiple response allowed)
- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| Freedom of the press                     | 17% |
| To be free                               | 13% |
| Citizens' rights are protected by law    | 6%  |
| Human, constitutional right observed     | 6%  |
| Political freedoms, freedom of choice    | 5%  |
| To live well                             | 5%  |
| Power of people, govt. listens to people | 5%  |
| Wealth, high standard of living          | 4%  |
| Fairness, equality before law            | 3%  |
| Developed economy, jobs                  | 1%  |
| No crime, safety                         | 1%  |
| Model of western countries               | 1%  |
| Social security                          | 1%  |
| Political opposition, political parties  | 1%  |
| Other                                    | 3%  |
| Don't know                               | 23% |
| No response                              | 15% |

60a. In your opinion, how common is the problem of official corruption in Belarus is it: [ROTATE 1-4  
TOP TO BOTTOM/BOTTOM TO TOP]

Very Common	37%
Fairly Common	35%
Fairly Rare	4%
Very Rare	1%
Hard to Say	21%
Refused/No Answer	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>

60b. [If 'Very' or 'Fairly' Common in Q60a] How serious is this problem?

Very Serious	42%
Fairly Serious	25%
Not Too Serious	2%
<i>Not asked</i>	29%
Hard to Say	2%
Refused/NA	*
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

61. For each body or group I mention, please tell me whether, in your opinion, corruption is very common, fairly common, fairly rare, or very rare?

A. Council of Ministers	
Very Common	21%
Fairly Common	27%
Fairly Rare	6%
Very Rare	2%
Hard to Say	38%
Refused/No Answer	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>

B. Regional Administration	
Very Common	22%
Fairly Common	35%
Fairly Rare	6%
Very Rare	2%
Hard to Say	29%
Refused/No Answer	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>

C. Town, Local Administration	
Very Common	23%
Fairly Common	36%
Fairly Rare	7%
Very Rare	2%
Hard to Say	25%
Refused/No Answer	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

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D. National Bank	
Very Common	20%
Fairly Common	28%
Fairly Rare	9%
Very Rare	2%
Hard to Say	34%
Refused/No Answer	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>

E. Commercial Banks	
Very Common	24%
Fairly Common	30%
Fairly Rare	7%
Very Rare	2%
Hard to Say	31%
Refused/No Answer	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>

F. Private Business	
Very Common	25%
Fairly Common	27%
Fairly Rare	7%
Very Rare	3%
Hard to Say	29%
Refused/No Answer	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

G. Joint Belarusian/Foreign Businesses	
Very Common	18%
Fairly Common	25%
Fairly Rare	7%
Very Rare	3%
Hard to Say	39%
Refused/No Answer	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>

H. National Assembly (Parliament)	
Very Common	15%
Fairly Common	22%
Fairly Rare	9%
Very Rare	3%
Hard to Say	42%
Refused/No Answer	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>102%✓</b>

I. Courts	
Very Common	26%
Fairly Common	30%
Fairly Rare	10%
Very Rare	2%
Hard to Say	25%
Refused/No Answer	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

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J. Military Forces	
Very Common	17%
Fairly Common	25%
Fairly Rare	15%
Very Rare	6%
Hard to Say	30%
Refused/No Answer	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>

K. State Security Service	
Very Common	15%
Fairly Common	20%
Fairly Rare	13%
Very Rare	7%
Hard to Say	36%
Refused/No Answer	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

L. President Lukashenko's Admin.	
Very Common	15%
Fairly Common	19%
Fairly Rare	17%
Very Rare	10%
Hard to Say	30%
Refused/No Answer	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

M. Political Parties	
Very Common	16%
Fairly Common	25%
Fairly Rare	8%
Very Rare	3%
Hard to Say	35%
Refused/No Answer	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>98%✓</b>

N. Militia	
Very Common	35%
Fairly Common	29%
Fairly Rare	7%
Very Rare	2%
Hard to Say	20%
Refused/No Answer	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

O. Church	
Very Common	4%
Fairly Common	8%
Fairly Rare	18%
Very Rare	31%
Hard to Say	31%
Refused/No Answer	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>



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O. Mass Media	
Very Common	15%
Fairly Common	26%
Fairly Rare	13%
Very Rare	7%
Hard to Say	31%
Refused/No Answer	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>

62. In your opinion, how are people like you affected by corruption? (Open-end, multiple responses allowed)

Declining standard of living	11%
Negatively influence economic position of people	8%
Infringement of citizens' rights	7%
Increase in bribery	4%
Worsening economic situation	6%
Lawlessness, rise of crime	3%
Arbitrariness of officials, loss of confidence	3%
Connections and money more important	3%
Lack of truth, honesty, fairness	5%
Other	4%
No affect	9%
Don't know	24%
No response	19%

## DEMOGRAPHICS

63.	Gender	
	Male	43%
	Female	57%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>
64.	Age – How old are you?	
	18-24	14%
	25-34	18%
	35-44	23%
	45-54	15%
	55-64	11%
	65+	20%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>
65.	What is the highest level of education you received?	
	Primary	12%
	Secondary Incomplete	14%
	Secondary Complete	31%
	Secondary Vocational Complete	21%
	Less than three years of University	6%
	More than three years of University	2%
	University Complete	14%
	Scientific Degree	*
	Refused/NA	*
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>
66.	[RESPONDENT BOOKLET] Please turn to page #7 of your booklet. Which number best describes your current employment situation?	
	Employed fulltime at one job	47%
	Employed fulltime plus one parttime job	2%
	Employed parttime at one job	4%
	Employed at more than one parttime job	1%
	Student/pupil working	1%
	Student/pupil not working	5%
	Pensioner/Not Employed	27%
	Pensioner/Employed fulltime at one job	2%
	Pensioner/Employed parttime at one job	1%
	Pensioner/Employed parttime at more than one job	*
	Not Employed and receiving no state benefits	4%
	Not Employed and receiving state benefits	1%
	I do housework and take care of children	3%
	Other	1%
	Refused/No Answer	*
	<b>Total</b>	<b>99%✓</b>

67.	How do you receive your wages from your main job: 1) only cash, 2) partly cash, partly goods [ASK FOR PERCENTAGE OF EACH] , 3) only goods?	
	Only cash	58%
	Partly cash, partly goods	3%
	Only goods	*
	INAP: Do not work	39%
	Refused/NA	1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>
68.	What is your field of employment at your main work place?	
	Employer / head of enterprise, institution, or organization	2%
	Specialist with higher education (lawyer, bookkeeper, teacher, doctor, etc.)	9%
	Head of department, section, group	3%
	Employee without higher education	12%
	Self employed	2%
	Skilled worker	14%
	Unskilled worker	7%
	Apprentice	*
	Agricultural worker	8%
	Military servant, employee of Ministry of Interior Affairs	1%
	Never worked	*
	Other(SPECIFY)	1%
	Do not work	39%
	Refused / NA	1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>99%✓</b>
69.	What is your occupational specialty?	
	Industrial productions	15%
	Construction	5%
	Transportation, communications	6%
	Culture/education/sciences	8%
	Health care	3%
	Law	1%
	Trade and services	8%
	Agriculture	11%
	Security, defense	1%
	Other [SPECIFY]	2%
	INAP: Do not work	39%
	Refused/NA	2%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>

70.	Do you work in . . . [MAN JOB]	
	State enterprise	40%
	Private enterprise	7%
	Joint stock company	4%
	Collective farm	7%
	INAP: Do not work	39%
	DK	*
	Refused/NA	2%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>99%✓</b>
71.	Are you currently owed any back wages or pension payments from your employer or the government?	
	Yes	10%
	No	76%
	INAP: Do not work	12%
	DK	1%
	Refused/NA	2%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>
72.	(If Yes in Q71) For how long a period are you owed back payments?	
	One month or less	6%
	Two months	2%
	Three-six months	1%
	More than six months	*
	INAP: Q71 > 1	90%
	Don't Know	*
	Refused/NA	1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>
73.	What is your marital status?	
	Married	58%
	Single/Never Married	18%
	Divorced/Separated	8%
	Divorced, but still living together	2%
	Widowed	14%
	Refused/NA	1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>
74.	Do you have any children? [IF YES] Do they live with you?	
	Yes, live with respondent	47%
	Yes, do not live with respondent	29%
	No	23%
	Refused/NA	1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

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75.	What is your ethnicity? [DON'T READ]	
	Belarusian	73%
	Russian	16%
	Belarusian and Russian	1%
	Pole	6%
	Ukrainian	3%
	Jewish	1%
	Other	1%
	Refused/NA	*
	<b>Total</b>	<b>101%✓</b>
76.	Have you ever been discriminated against because of your ethnicity?	
	Yes	3%
	No	94%
	Don't Know	1%
	Refused/NA	2%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>
77.	What is the main language you speak in your home? <b>(TWO ANSWERS ACCEPTABLE)</b>	
	Belarusian	19%
	Russian	60%
	Belarusian and Russian	16%
	Local dialects	5%
	Other	1%
	Refused/NA	1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>102%✓</b>
78.	What is the main language you speak in your work? <b>(TWO ANSWERS ACCEPTABLE)</b>	
	Belarusian	8%
	Russian	41%
	Belarusian and Russian	8%
	Local dialect	3%
	Other	*
	INAP: Does not work	40%
	Refused/NA	*
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

79. [RESPONDENT BOOKLET] PLEASE TURN TO PAGE # 8 OF YOUR BOOKLET. Are you [or your husband/wife] a member of any of the following organizations ON THIS LIST? **(ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES)**
- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Educational/Scientific/Scholarly organization | *            |
| Religious                                     | 1%           |
| Charitable group                              | 1%           |
| Women's group                                 | 1%           |
| Youth group                                   | 1%           |
| Sports Organizations                          | 1%           |
| Political parties                             | 1%           |
| Consumer rights                               | *            |
| Trade union/Worker's groups                   | 36%          |
| Veterans Group                                | 1%           |
| Student's organization                        | 1%           |
| NONE  | 41%          |
| Other   | 2%           |
| Don't Know                                    | 5%           |
| Refused                                       | 12%          |
| <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>101%✓</b> |
80. In your opinion, how important is the role for NGOs, such as those listed on Page #8, for addressing the problems in your own lives? Are they very important, somewhat important, not so important, or not important at all?
- |                     |              |
|---------------------|--------------|
| Very important      | 13%          |
| Somewhat important  | 34%          |
| Not so important    | 15%          |
| No important at all | 9%           |
| Don' know           | 28%          |
| Refused/NA          | 2%           |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>101%✓</b> |
81. To what church or religious group do you belong?
- |                  |             |
|------------------|-------------|
| Russian Orthodox | 72%         |
| Roman Catholic   | 9%          |
| Greek Catholic   | *           |
| Protestant       | *           |
| Jewish           | *           |
| Other            | 1%          |
| None             | 16%         |
| Refused/NA       | 1%          |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>99%✓</b> |

- 
82. [RESPONDENT BOOKLET] Please turn to page #9 in your booklet. Which number best describes the current financial situation of you and your family living there with you?
- |   |             |
|---|-------------|
| Very poor, we do not have enough money for our most basic needs                                   | 6%          |
| Poor, we barely have enough money to buy food, we rarely buy clothes                              | 19%         |
| Modest, we have enough to eat, we occasionally buy clothes, but we have nothing left over to save | 49%         |
| Moderate, we have some savings  | 22%         |
| Above average, we have savings, and can afford a lot  | 1%          |
| NA  | 3%          |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>100%</b> |
83. In your opinion, how much do most people in Belarus rely on the shadow economy for their livelihood?
- |               |             |
|---------------|-------------|
| A great deal  | 11%         |
| A fair amount | 29%         |
| Not very much | 18%         |
| Not at all    | 4%          |
| Don't Know    | 33%         |
| Refused/NA    | 4%          |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>99%✓</b> |





## **Appendix II: Map of Belarus**



