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# IFES PUBLIC OPINION IN UKRAINE 2013 KEY FINDINGS



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# **IFES Public Opinion in Ukraine 2013 Key Findings**



International Foundation for Electoral Systems



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This report details the findings from the latest International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) survey in Ukraine. This is the 21st public opinion poll conducted in Ukraine by IFES and some of the findings from earlier surveys will be referenced in this briefing paper. The fieldwork for this most recent survey was conducted between October 26 and November 8, 2013, with 1,517 respondents throughout Ukraine. This sample comprised a national sample of 1,267 respondents and an over-sample of 125 respondents in Kyiv and 125 respondents in Crimea. The data has been weighted by region, age and gender to be nationally representative for the adult (18+) population of Ukraine. The margin of error for a sample of this size is plus/minus 2.6%. The fieldwork and data processing for the survey were conducted by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology (KIIS), based in Kyiv. Funding for the survey was provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

## **Opinions on Current Situation in the Country**

- Sentiments on the direction in which Ukraine is headed have turned decidedly negative over the past year. A clear majority (58%) believes that Ukraine is headed toward instability (up from 53% in 2012), while only 14% believe Ukraine is headed toward stability (down from 22% in 2012). There has been significant deterioration of opinions on this issue in Eastern and Southern Ukraine over the past year. In eastern Ukraine, the percentage with negative assessments on this question has increased from 36% in 2012 to 56% in this year's survey, while in southern Ukraine this percentage increased from 43% to 59%.
- Majority dissatisfaction with the socio-political situation in the country drives attitudes toward the direction in which Ukraine is headed. Close to nine in 10 Ukrainians (86%) are very or somewhat dissatisfied with the economic situation in the country, while 78% express the same opinion on the political situation in the country. The vast majority of Ukrainians in major sub-groups in the population based on gender, education, age and region express dissatisfaction with the economic and political situation. There is also a great deal of dissatisfaction with the healthcare situation in the country nationally (88% very or somewhat dissatisfied) and across major sub-groups in the population. Fewer Ukrainians, but still a majority, are dissatisfied with the country's foreign policy (61% dissatisfied, 22% satisfied) and with the cultural situation (55% dissatisfied, 30% satisfied).
- Responses on several questions in the survey point to the primacy of economic concerns voiced by most Ukrainians. When asked whether Ukraine's economic situation is better, worse or the same as a year ago, 52% describe it as worse, 37% describe it as the same and only 6% describe it as better. Similar sentiments are reported for the family economic situation. Forty-five percent describe their family's economic situation as worse compared to a year ago, 48% describe it as being the same, and 4% describe it as being better.
- Similar to previous IFES surveys in Ukraine, economic issues receive the most mentions when it comes to serious issues facing the country. In this year's survey, 56% list inflation, 51% poverty, 50% unemployment, 47% corruption, 30% general economic problems, 23% healthcare and 21% political bickering and political instability. Interestingly, the current situation regarding Ukraine's economic

orientation also has an impact as 14% cite problems with Russia, 9% cite prospects of Ukraine joining the European Union, 9% energy independence and 4% the prospect of Ukraine joining the Customs Union.

- Given the importance of the current negotiations about Ukraine possibly taking steps to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union, it is interesting to note that Ukrainians are split on whether the country should join the European Union or the Customs Union. Thirty-seven percent would like Ukraine to take steps to join the European Union, 33% prefer the Customs Union and 15% say Ukraine should join neither of these blocs. On another question, 34% say that Ukraine should have closer economic relations with Russia, 35% say it should have closer economic relations with Europe and 17% say it should have good relations with both. As would be expected, there are significant regional differences on these issues, with a greater percentage in the West, North and Kyiv taking pro-European positions and those in the East and South taking more pro-Russian positions. In the Center, 37% think Ukraine should have closer relations with Europe, while 26% prefer closer relations with Russia. These opinions in the Center represent a significant shift from the 2012 survey when 37% picked Russia and 23% picked Europe.

## Opinions on Leaders and Institutions

- The declining satisfaction with the current situation in the country compared to 2012 has had a negative impact on perceptions of leaders and institutions in the country. The majority of Ukrainians profess a lack of confidence in all of the major national leaders they were asked to rate: President Viktor Yanukovich (23% confidence, 69% not); Head of UDAR Vitali Klitschko (37%, 52%); Prime Minister Mykola Azarov (19%, 73%); Speaker of Parliament Volodymyr Rybak (13%, 68%); Yulia Tymoshenko (22%, 67%); Head of Batkivschina Arseniy Yatsenyuk (23%, 66%); Head of Svoboda Oleh Tyahnybok (18%, 70%); and Head of the Communist Party Petro Symonenko (15%, 75%). The percent expressing a lack of confidence in these leaders has risen for each of them from 2012 to 2013.
- There is continued dissatisfaction with President Yanukovich's handling of key issues. Pointing to the dissatisfaction with the economic situation in the country, 91% are dissatisfied with his policies to create jobs and 90% are dissatisfied with his effort to address inflation. Eighty-five percent are dissatisfied with his efforts to address corruption and 71% with efforts to limit the influence of oligarchs. The majority of Ukrainians, particularly those in Eastern and Southern regions, are dissatisfied with Yanukovich's handling of relations with Russia (68%) more so than his performance in addressing the status of Ukraine and the EU (48%).
- With the scheduled presidential elections approaching in 2015, respondents on the survey were asked to select who they would vote for among a list of possible candidates. At the time the survey was developed, Yulia Tymoshenko was listed as one of the candidates. With her in the list, 17% selected Yanukovich, 16% Klitschko, 9% Tymoshenko, 5% Symonenko, 4% Yatsenyuk and 3% Tyahnybok. Thirteen percent would vote against all. However, with the expectation that no one

candidate is likely to win in the first round, respondents were also asked to give three possible second-round matchups and asked to name their choice.

- In a contest between Yanukovych and Klitschko, 36% would choose Klitschko, 20% Yanukovych, 13% do not know, 18% against all and 12% would not vote.
  - In a contest between Yanukovych and Yatsenyuk, 26% would choose Yatsenyuk, 22% Yanukovych, 23% against all, 14% do not know and 12% would not vote.
  - In a contest between Yanukovych and Tyahnybok, 24% would choose Yanukovych, 18% Tyahnybok, 27% against all, 16% do not know and 13% would not vote.
- The decline in confidence in political leaders has been accompanied by a decline in confidence in many institutions in the country. Confidence in the Verhovna Rada has fallen from 23% in 2012 to 16% in this year's survey (75% lack confidence). Similarly, there is little confidence in the Cabinet of Ministers (20%) and the Central Election Commission (21%). Local-level institutions and leaders fare somewhat better with 44% expressing confidence in the mayor of their city/village local self-government and 39% expressing confidence in their city council. Regional officials, however, fare worse than local officials as only 28% express confidence in their Raion administrator and 25% in their Oblast governor. The media is the highest rated institution (45% express confidence) and 37% express confidence in the military.

## Democracy and Rights

- When asked to state their preference for a system of government for Ukraine, 37% of Ukrainians say that democracy is preferable to other systems of government, 21% think that in certain situations a non-democratic system may be preferable, while 29% say the system of government does not matter to them. The percentage preferring democracy has fallen from 46% in 2012 to 37% this year, while the percentage apathetic about the system of government has increased from 20% to 29%. Preference for a democratic system of government is highest in all age groups with the exception of those 56 and over. Among this group, 32% do not think the type of government matters to them, while 30% prefer democracy and 20% believe a non-democratic system of government can be preferable in some situations. Preference for democracy is highest in the Center (51%) and West (46%), and lowest in the East (28%). The East is the only region where a slightly higher percentage believes that a non-democratic government may be preferable in some situations (30%).
- Many Ukrainians who prefer a democratic system of governance do so despite high levels of dissatisfaction with the way democracy works in Ukraine. Nationally, only 12% of Ukrainians say that they are very or somewhat satisfied with the way democracy works in Ukraine, compared to 64% who are very or somewhat dissatisfied. Twenty-three percent do not offer an opinion. Among those who prefer a democratic system of government, 19% are satisfied with democracy in Ukraine compared to 69% who are dissatisfied. Satisfaction with democracy in Ukraine is lower among those who prefer a non-democratic system in some situations (8% satisfied) and among those apathetic about the system of government (9%).



- Those who are dissatisfied with the way democracy works are asked why they are dissatisfied, 21% mention lack of rule of law and ineffective judiciary, 20% mention the lack of respect of rights, 16% mention corruption, 14% mention economic difficulties and 10% mention ineffective governance. An additional 15% also mention that democracy only exists in name in Ukraine. Among those satisfied with the way democracy works in Ukraine, most mention citizens' rights as the reason for their satisfaction.
- Given the high level of dissatisfaction with the way democracy works in Ukraine, it is not surprising that a significantly higher percentage of Ukrainians say that Ukraine is not a democracy compared to the percentage that says that it is a democracy (46% versus 20%). Twelve percent think Ukraine has both democratic and non-democratic tendencies, and 22% do not offer an opinion. The percentage saying Ukraine is a democracy has declined slightly from 2012 to 2013 (25% versus 20%).
- Compared to data from the 2012 survey, there has been little change in the values that Ukrainians associate with democracy. When asked to pick up to five statements they associate most with democracy, a majority picks protecting human rights (60%), followed by consistent enforcement of the law (48%), no official corruption (44%) and everyone has work (43%). Fewer mention freedom of speech (37%), state support of pensioners (27%), the freedom to vote (25%), state support of those unable to work (23%), freedom of the press (20%) and a system of checks and balances between different branches of the government (18%).
- While both rights and economic security are prominently mentioned in terms of the values that Ukrainians generally associate with democracy, responses to another question on the survey indicates that economic development may be given priority by a significant percentage of Ukrainians. When given a choice between competing priorities (the question artificially assumes a middle ground in not available), 39% agree that it should be a priority for Ukraine to pursue economic development even if it means foregoing some rights. On the other hand, 31% think the priority should be to maintain democratic rights even if it means that the economy grows slowly. The West is the only region in which a significantly higher percentage prioritizes maintaining democratic rights over economic development (36% versus 30%), while those in the Center (28% versus 26%) and Kyiv (34% versus 32%) are generally split on the issue.
- Significantly more Ukrainians also believe that democracy as a system is not good for maintaining order, 44% agreeing with this statement and 36% disagreeing. Those who prefer a democratic system of government are more likely to disagree than agree with this statement (57% versus 29%), while those open to a non-democratic system of government are more likely to agree than disagree (64% versus 24%). More Ukrainians are also likely to agree that it is more important for political leaders to maintain order than protect rights, 40% agreeing with this statement and 36% disagreeing.

- While more Ukrainians seem open to steps that maintain order over maintaining rights in general, they are far less likely to support curtailment of specific rights when presented with these choices. When asked whether it would be justified for the government to restrict certain rights in order to maintain order, a majority does not feel the government would be justified in limiting freedom of the media (69%), limiting the rights of citizens to protest (63%) and limiting the authority of the courts (57%). Significantly more Ukrainians than not also believe the government would be justified in limiting the activities of citizens' groups and unions (51% not justified, 11% justified), limiting rights of private businesses (47%, 9%) and limiting the activities of opposition parties (47%, 15%).

## **Elections and Voting**

- When asked for their opinion on the integrity of elections in Ukraine, only 11% of Ukrainians say that elections in Ukraine are completely free and fair. Thirty percent describe them as somewhat free and fair, 24% say that elections are not very free and fair, while a further 15% say that elections are not at all free and fair. Pessimism about the election is higher in Kyiv and the northern and western regions of Ukraine, than it is in southern, eastern and central regions.
- Those who do not think the elections are completely free and fair were next given a list of reasons commonly cited for lapses in electoral integrity in Ukraine and asked which of these reasons they thought lead the elections not to be completely free and fair. Of those asked, 68% say that elections are not completely free and fair because the election results are falsified. A majority of these respondents (58%) also say that elections are not free and fair because voters are given money or other rewards to vote a certain way. The percentage citing other reasons are: falsified ballots are stuffed in ballot boxes (32%); some voters are stopped from voting (25%); voters are intimidated to vote a certain way (21%); some voters are allowed to vote multiple times (19%); authorities pressure parties and candidates from campaigning openly (19%); and media coverage unfairly favors the ruling party (13%).
- Respondents were also given a series of specific statements about the election process in Ukraine and asked whether they agree or disagree with the statements. A majority of respondents (64%) disagree that election results accurately reflect the way that people voted in elections, while only 24% agree that election results do accurately reflect the way people vote. Positive perceptions in other areas of the electoral process are higher, with 71% of Ukrainians agreeing that they feel safe while voting, while 66% feel that they are well-informed about the electoral process in Ukraine, and another 67% agree that the presence of international observers has a positive effect on the fairness of Ukrainian elections. Fifty-seven percent of Ukrainians agree that elections in Ukraine are administered competently; however there are concerns about the national media providing objective coverage of parties and candidates in elections, with only 44% of Ukrainians agreeing with this statement.
- As has been the trend for most IFES surveys in Ukraine, the majority of Ukrainians do not believe that voting gives them influence over decision-making. Fifty-nine percent either strongly or

somewhat disagree that voting gives them influence, while 32% strongly or somewhat agree with this statement. Ukrainians are even less likely to agree that ordinary people generally can have influence on decisions made by the government. Eighteen percent agree with this statement while 74% disagree. Not surprisingly, those who agree that they have influence either through elections or in general are more likely to report voting in recent elections than those who disagree. Despite the majority's lack of conviction that voting gives them influence, a majority (62%) believes that if their favored candidate loses in an election the best course of action is to accept their candidate's defeat and wait till the next election to voice their opinion. Less than two in 10 say that the losing candidates' supporter should organize a protest of election results (9%) or that they should boycott future elections (7%).

- In contrast to perceptions of the lack of confidence in the influence that ordinary citizens can have on decision-making, Ukrainians are more likely to believe that working together with others in their community can bring about needed changes. A majority (56%) agrees with this statement while 27% disagree. Ukrainians are not as confident about individuals having an impact on their community's development. A majority (51%) disagrees that they have a role to play in solving problems in their community, compared to 36% who agree.

## **Political Parties and Campaign Finance Issues**

- More than four in 10 Ukrainians are largely apathetic about which party best represents the views and interests of people like them. Twenty-seven percent of Ukrainians said that no party best represents their interests, while a further 18% said they do not know which party best represents their views and interests. Among the parties that were listed, the Party of Regions receives the most mentions (15%), followed by UDAR (14%), Batkivschyna (12%) and the Communist Party (6%).
- The degree of apathy toward political parties is partly driven by perceptions of interests served by these parties. When asked whose interests are served by political parties, only 5% say that they serve the interests of the Ukrainian people. Most respondents (47%) say that political parties serve their own interests, while 19% say they serve business interests and 15% say they support the interests of those in power.
- The level of popular distrust in political parties and the political class in general in Ukraine is also highlighted by responses to several statements focused on politicians.
  - Eighty-three percent agree that politicians do not understand people like them.
  - Seventy-nine percent agree that politicians do not fulfill their promises and cannot be trusted.
  - Seventy-five percent agree that no matter who votes, politicians only listen to rich people.

- A large majority of Ukrainians (69%) think it is very or somewhat important that candidates and parties publicly disclose the amounts of money donated to their campaigns. Only 21% do not think it is important for parties and candidates to publicly disclose the amount so money donated to their campaigns. Respondents were also asked whether parties are accurate in disclosing their spending. Half (50%) disagree that parties are accurate in disclosing their spending, while 38% agree that they are accurate.
- While there is strong support for campaign finance regulation, Ukrainians also believe other factors are more important for party or candidate success. Over half of respondents believe the personality of the candidate (46%), ideological platform (38%), effective media outreach (21%) or political party affiliation (21%) are the most important factors for party or candidate success. Close to three in 10 Ukrainians stated that financial resources (36%) and access to state resources/ incumbency (22%) are key factors. Only 6% of Ukrainians feel personal or family affiliation contributes to a party or candidate's success.
- An overwhelming 89% of Ukrainians strongly or somewhat agree that there should be a ban on state resources being used for election campaigns. Ukrainians would also like to see more equity in the use of money during political campaigns. Seventy percent of Ukrainians feel that there should be limits on how much parties and candidates can spend on their election campaigns, while 69% agrees that the state should provide a minimum level of funding to all candidates.

## **Civil Society Organizations**

- Membership in civic organizations is low countrywide. Across Ukraine, 85% of Ukrainians say that they are not a member of civic organization. Of the 14% who responded that they are a member of a civic organization, most stated that they are members of a trade union, with 61% of members of civic organizations stating that they were members of trade unions.
- Awareness of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Ukraine remains low. While 15% of Ukrainians say that they know of NGOs that are active in Ukraine, 59% say they do not know any and a further 19% said that they do not know what an NGO is. Among the NGOs named by the respondents are the Red Cross (12% of those who could name an NGO), Humanitarian Aid (6%) and Union Chernobyl (6%).
- Ukrainians familiar with NGOs continue to support these organizations working in various socio-political sectors, such as health (86%); humanitarian/charitable aid (86%); education (82%); women's rights (82%); judicial and legal (81%); and democracy and governance (70%). Support for NGO activity in these sectors has remained relatively consistent over the past two years.

- When asked how necessary NGOs are for Ukraine, over three-quarters (79%) of those who know what an NGO is, say that they are either essential (31%) or necessary (48%). Very few Ukrainians say that NGOs are not very necessary (7%) or not at all necessary (3%) for Ukraine.

## Opinions on Electoral and Political Participation of Women

- A large majority of Ukrainians tend to support women's involvement in politics, with some variance by gender and region. A majority of Ukrainians either strongly or somewhat support:
  - Women working for election commissions (94%)
  - Women serving as civil servants (91%)
  - Women working for a candidate during a campaign (91%)
  - Women serving in the parliament (89%)
  - Women being members of political parties (88%)
  - Women running as candidates in the elections (85%)
  - Women serving in local government (85%)
  - Women serving as ministers (82%)
  - Women heading a political party (81%)
  - Women participating in protests (76%)
- While there is strong overall support for women in political roles across all of Ukraine, there is some variance by region on specific issues. The strongest support for women working as members of election commissions is in the West and East where 56% and 57%, respectively, strongly support this role for women. Fifty percent of respondents in the South also voice this opinion. Respondents from Kyiv more frequently claim to somewhat support women's political involvement (rather than 'strongly support' it). Some of these areas of participation include: women working for election commissions (64%), women being members of political parties (58%), women serving in the parliament (56%) and women running as candidates in the elections (53%).
- Respondents were asked who they would support in an election if choosing between a woman and a man candidate with equal credentials. Almost an equal number of men (68%) and women (66%) felt that there was no difference between male and female. Moreover, almost an equal number of respondents chose male candidates as those who chose female candidates (15% male, 13% female). Among respondents preferring a male candidate, some of the reasons cited included:
  - Men are traditionally the heads of the family/community (8%),
  - Women are weaker and men are stronger (6%)
  - I trust men more (5%)
  - Men are not busy in the household (5%)

Among those preferring a female candidate, reasons cited included the fact that women better understand the needs of all people (8%), Women are responsible, sensible (7%), Women are smarter (6%), and women should be given a chance in power (6%).

- Considering that the proportion of female Rada members is approximately 10%, over 4 in 10 Ukrainians feel the proportion of women in parliaments is too low (43%), 40% believe it is about right and 3% say it is too high. Women are more likely than men to say that the proportion is too low (50% versus 34%), while men are more likely than women to say that the proportion is about right (46% versus 35%).
- When asked why Ukrainian women are elected to office less often than men, 51% cite the reason that women have family obligations and therefore do not have time. It is worth noting that almost an equal proportion of men (52%) and women (51%) cited this response. Additionally, 30% of Ukrainians feel that parties do not support women candidates as well as men. Other reasons cited include the fact that women are not interested in politics (19%), society does not want (or support) women as political candidates (17%) and women are not qualified or do not have enough skills (14%).

## **Opinions on Electoral Participation of Persons with Disabilities**

- A vast majority of Ukrainians (82%) believe that it is important for people with disabilities to participate as voters in elections in Ukraine. Overall, 47% of respondents say that this is very important, 35% said it was somewhat important, while only 4% stated that it was not very important or not at all important that people with disabilities participate in elections. A large majority of both female (85%) and male (79%) respondents say that it is either very or somewhat important for people with disabilities to participate in elections. Three-quarters or more of respondents in each region of the country also believe that electoral participation of persons with disabilities is important, with those in the West (93%) most likely to voice this opinion.
- Ukrainians who believe in the importance of allowing persons with disabilities to vote gave as reasons for their support that human rights are identical for all individuals (23%), that they have the right to vote (21%), and that persons with disabilities are the same as everyone else (19%). Those who felt that it was not important largely cited their opinion that nothing will change in Ukraine as a result of the participation of persons with disabilities (40%).
- The survey sought to ascertain whether Ukrainians believed electoral authorities should dedicate resources to undertake initiatives for making polling stations more accessible. Overall, 93% of Ukrainians think that electoral authorities should allocate resources to make polling stations more accessible for persons with disabilities, while the same percentage also thinks that all polling stations should have officials specifically responsible for providing assistance for persons with disabilities.

- Respondents were given a scenario with two election candidates, one with a disability and one without, and asked which one they would be likely to support in an election. Overall, 65% of Ukrainians say it does not matter to them whether a candidate has a disability or does not. Seventeen percent say that they would support the candidate without a disability in this scenario, while 7% say they would support the candidate with a disability. In looking at the regional breakdown, 86% of Ukrainians in the center of the country say it does not matter to them whether a candidate has a disability or not, whereas only 42% of Ukrainians in the North agree with this.
- Ukrainians who said they would support a candidate with a disability gave reasons such as the candidate has felt all of the problems of society, so she/he can solve address these problems (24%), they would be more likely to be sensitive and understand other people (21%) and that they are closer to the common people (19%). Those that would not support a candidate with a disability said they would not do so because health is needed for that kind of work (34%), the candidate would have lesser abilities than the healthy one (18%) and that it is difficult to work for disabled persons (18%).
- Respondents were asked about the best choice for providing access to voting for the elderly and those with disabilities between voters voting in their homes, or providing better access to polling stations for this population. Overall, 34% think that home voting is the best option, 25% think that improved access to polling station is best, while 37% believe that both options are acceptable. Support for better access to polling stations is higher in Kyiv (42%) and eastern Ukraine (35%) than in the rest of the country. This contrasts with the levels of support for voting at home, which receives little support in Kyiv (17%) in comparison to the rest of the country.







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