

**PUBLIC OPINION IN UKRAINE:  
FINDINGS FROM AN IFES NOVEMBER 2005 SURVEY**

**IFES**



In Collaboration With



Фонд "Демократичні ініціативи"  
*Democratic Initiatives Foundation*

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This report details key findings from the latest IFES survey in Ukraine. This is the 14<sup>th</sup> public opinion poll conducted in Ukraine by IFES and some of the findings from earlier surveys will be referenced in this report. The two most recent surveys cited are the February 2005 post-election and September 2004 pre-election surveys. Both these surveys were conducted with 1265 respondents throughout Ukraine. The fieldwork for this most recent survey was conducted from November 2-14, 2005 with 1265 respondents throughout Ukraine. This sample comprised a national sample of 1,200 respondents and an over-sample of 65 respondents in Kyiv. The data has been weighted by region, age, and gender to be nationally representative for the adult (18+) population of Ukraine. The margin of error for a sample of this size is plus/minus 2.75%. IFES worked in collaboration with Democratic Initiatives Foundation in the design and management of this research. This research was funded by the United States Agency for International Development.

### Opinions on Socio-Political Situation in Ukraine

- More Ukrainians than not believe that the socio-political situation in the country has deteriorated rather than improved since the December 2004 second round of the presidential elections. A majority (57%) feel that there has been a great or slight decline in the economic situation in the country since the election, while only 13% believe that there has been an improvement in this area (26% think the economic situation is the same). Most Ukrainians also do not perceive an improvement in the fight against corruption since the December election. Slightly more than one in five (21%) feels that there has been a great or slight improvement in the fight against corruption, whereas a majority of Ukrainians either feel that there has been no change (40%) or a decline in the fight against corruption (29%).
- These pessimistic sentiments also carry over to the political arena. Forty-three percent of Ukrainians believe that political stability in the country has declined since the December 2004 elections, compared to 14% who say it has improved, and a third (33%) who say it has remained the same. Slightly more Ukrainians believe that respect for human rights by the authorities has declined rather than improved since the election (27% versus 21%); while a plurality of 43% believe it has remained the same. A majority of Ukrainians (51%) believe that Ukraine's relations with Russia have declined since the December election compared to 11% who believe that they have improved. On the other hand, 38% of Ukrainians believe that Ukraine's relations with western countries have improved compared to 9% who think that they have declined. A little more than a third in each case (37% for relations with Russia, 35% for relations with western countries) believes that relations have neither improved nor declined.
- Overall, the majority of Ukrainians are dissatisfied with the economic and political situation in the country. More than four in five Ukrainians (83%) say that they are very or somewhat dissatisfied with the economic situation in the country, an increase in dissatisfaction from 75% in the October 2004 survey. More than three-quarters (76%) say they are dissatisfied with the political situation in the country, compared to 71% in October 2004. Seventy-three percent of Ukrainians are dissatisfied with both the economic and political situation in the country, while only 8% are satisfied with both.



- Forty-two percent of Ukrainians say that their family's economic situation is worse now than one year ago, while only 14% say that it is better. More Ukrainians are pessimistic rather than optimistic about future economic conditions. In this survey, 14% believe that their family's economic situation will be better in one year, 24% think it will be worse, and 28% think it will remain the same. In the October 2004 survey, 22% thought their family's economic situation would get better and 14% thought it would get worse.
- Ukrainians generally do not perceive a difference in the pace of economic reforms in this year's survey compared to the October 2004 survey. Overall, 41% believe that economic reforms are moving too slowly (39% in 2004), 8% believe they are occurring at the right pace (14% in 2004), 5% believe they are occurring too quickly (4% in 2004), and 27% believe they are not occurring at all (22% in 2004).
- While positive assessments of the demonstrations surrounding the Orange revolution still outnumber negative assessments, there has been a slight decline in positive assessments since the February 2005 survey. In this survey, 59% of Ukrainians strongly or somewhat agree that the use of demonstrations was a legitimate exercise of democratic rights. In the February survey, 70% agreed with this statement. Fifty-eight percent in this survey agree that the demonstrations raised valid concerns about the fairness of the November 2005 second-round elections, compared to 65% in the February survey. Fewer Ukrainians also stress that the demonstrations played a role in furthering democracy in Ukraine (48% compared to 62% in February 2005 survey).
- Combining responses to several questions regarding the demonstrations surrounding the Orange revolution and its impact shows that the core support enjoyed by the revolution has somewhat dissipated since the February survey. In the February survey, 48% of Ukrainians were identified as being strongly supportive of the revolution and its impact, while 23% were identified as being strongly opposed to the revolution. While the percentage of those strongly opposed to the revolution has stayed roughly the same in this survey (25%), supporters have divided into two camps. One group still comprises strongly supporters of the revolution but this group now comprises 29% of the population. The other group still supports the goals of the Orange revolution, but is highly dissatisfied with what has gone on in the socio-political environment in Ukraine since the revolution. This group comprises 24% of the population and has increased negative perceptions of officials and institutions in the country.

### Attitudes toward Politics and Political System

- Given a series of statements that could define what it means to live in a democracy, Ukrainians most often said the living in a democracy means the protection of human rights (57%), that everyone has work (42%), freedom of speech (41%), fair and consistent enforcement of the laws (40%), no official corruption (38%), freedom to vote (35%), and that retirees are looked after by the state (33%).
- In this survey, 26% of Ukrainians say that Ukraine is a democracy, compared to 50% who say that Ukraine is not a democracy. This represents a decline in positive sentiment from



the February 2005 survey in which 30% said that Ukraine is a democracy and 40% indicated it was not a democracy.

- There has also been a decline since the February survey that ordinary people can impact politics. Less than a quarter (23%) agrees that people like them can have influence on decisions made by the government, down from 30% in the February survey. There is higher agreement that voting gives ordinary people influence over decision-making (37%) but 53% disagree with this sentiment. This is a reversal of opinions in the February survey where 53% agreed that voting influences decision-making and 40% disagree with this statement.
- When Ukrainians are asked whether they oppose or support President Yuschenko's dismissal of former Prime Minister Tymoshenko, there is a near split in public opinion with 40% saying they support her dismissal and 36% saying they oppose her dismissal. Those who support Tymoshenko's dismissal cite the ineffectiveness of her government, rising prices, lowered pensions, and her lack of integrity as reasons why they support her dismissal. Those who oppose her dismissal say that her government was effective and was going after corrupt elements in society, and many of these respondents say that Tymoshenko was impeded in her work.
- A plurality of Ukrainians (33%) says that the removal of Tymoshenko from office has decreased their confidence in the government. Thirty-one percent say that this has had no effect on their level of confidence in the government and 13% say that it has increased their level of confidence. Among those who oppose Tymoshenko's removal from office, 66% say their confidence in the government has decreased. Among those who support the removal, 42% say their level of confidence in the government remains unchanged and 28% say their level of confidence has increased.
- There has been a loss of confidence in national-level institutions and leaders since the February 2005 survey. The percent professing a great deal or fair amount of confidence in the president has fallen from 65% in the February survey to 46% in this survey. Forty-seven percent say they do not have much or any confidence in the president. Confidence in the Cabinet of Ministers has fallen from 57% to 36%, with a majority (55%) now saying they lack confidence in the cabinet. Confidence has also fallen for the *Verkhovna Rada*, from 54% in February to 37% in this survey. A majority (54%) still say they have confidence in the military, although this is a decline from 65% in the February survey.

## Elections

- When asked for their likelihood of voting in the March 2006 parliamentary elections, 60% of Ukrainians say that they are very likely to vote in these elections and 25% say they are somewhat likely to vote. A majority of all major sub-groups in society say that they are very likely to vote in the elections.
- While the majority of Ukrainians say that they are likely to vote in the March 2006 elections, there is a split in opinions on whether these elections will be fair. Thirty-eight percent of Ukrainians say that the election will be completely or somewhat free and fair, while 34%



think that the March election will primarily not be free and fair. These opinions represent a significant change from opinions in the February survey. In that survey, 57% of Ukrainians thought the December second round election was fair while 25% thought it was not fair.

- Along with a decline in the perceived overall fairness of elections, this survey also sees a decline in confidence in several aspects of the election process in Ukraine compared to opinions expressed in the February 2005 survey on the December second round of the presidential election. In this survey, 38% of Ukrainians agree that the results of elections accurately reflect the way people voted in an election while 44% disagree. In the February survey, 67% thought that the election results for the December 2004 second round accurately reflected the way people voted in that election. In this survey, 47% of respondents think that elections in Ukraine are competently administered. This compares with 68% in the February survey who thought the December 2004 second round election was competently administered.
- One area in which a high percentage of Ukrainians still profess confidence is in the role played by election observers. Two-thirds or more of all Ukrainians believe that the presence of each of domestic, international, and political observers has a positive impact on the fairness of the election process. While 59% believe that the media is thorough in its coverage of all parties and candidates, this does represent a drop from 72% in the February survey who expressed this sentiment about the December 2004 second round of the election.
- Fifty-six percent of Ukrainians state that they are informed about the electoral process in Ukraine, but there is less information on political developments in the country. Only 30% of Ukrainians say that they receive enough information about political developments to make a wise choice when voting. Thirty-eight percent say that they receive barely enough information to make a wise choice and 23% say they receive little or no information to make a wise choice when voting.
- Respondents on the survey were asked to name the party or bloc they would vote for in the parliamentary election if the election was to take place the following Sunday. Nineteen percent named the Party of Regions led by Viktor Yanukovich, 13% named Our Ukraine, 11% the Tymoshenko bloc, 4% each named the Communist party and the Socialist party, and 3% named the National party. It should be noted that 35% do not know or do not have enough information to make a choice yet. The Party of Regions has its core strength in Eastern and Southern Ukraine while both Our Ukraine and the Tymoshenko bloc are popular in Western and West-Central Ukraine. While strong supporters of the revolution still opt in large numbers for Our Ukraine and the Tymoshenko blocs, dissatisfied supporters of the revolution are likely to split their votes between the Party of Regions on one hand, and the reformist blocs on the other. This represents a significant fracture in coalition that made possible the success of the Orange revolution.

### Opinions on US Assistance to Ukraine

- More Ukrainians than not say that US Assistance to Ukraine is generally a negative thing. Overall, 43% say that US assistance to Ukraine is generally a very or somewhat negative thing, compared to 33% who think it is generally positive. Opinions on this question break



down to a large extent along opinions on the Orange revolution. A majority of strong supporters of the revolution have positive evaluations of US assistance, while a majority of strong opponents have negative evaluations. Dissatisfied supporters of the revolution generally tend to have negative assessments of US assistance, perhaps relating assistance from the west to difficulties faced by Ukraine since the December election.

- When asked to assess whether they would support or oppose US assistance to Ukraine in specific areas, nearly half (49%) say that they would oppose US assistance for the development of democracy and governance in Ukraine, while 38% would support this. The breakdown of opinions on this question reflects opinions on the revolution. US assistance in two other areas is received more warmly. Forty-nine percent would support US assistance for economic and business development (39% oppose it), and a majority (58%) would support US assistance to modernize health care and reform the social benefits system in the country.
- Few Ukrainians have heard of USAID. Only 5% say that they have heard of USAID and only 2% say that they have seen or heard the local press do a story on USAID programs.

