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EU ACCESSION AND HUMAN RIGHTS: SUPPORT AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONDITIONS

Results of a nationwide public opinion survey conducted in October 2026 for the Center for Civil Liberties

Summary of the Analytical Report

October 2026

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In October 2026, the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) conducted the survey "Opinions and Views of the Population of Ukraine on European Integration," commissioned by the NGO Center for Civil Liberties. The survey explored the opinions and views of adult residents of Ukraine (aged 18 and older) on various issues related to Ukraine's accession to the European Union. The main stages of the telephone survey included developing and programming the questionnaire (using OCA for CATI software), generating mobile phone numbers, interviewing respondents, quality control, preparing the final data set, weighting the data, and preparing frequency tables and the analytical report.

The survey used computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI). According to a KIIS survey conducted through face-to-face interviews with a random sample in December 2024, 99% of adult residents of Ukraine had personal mobile phones. In the initial stage of the survey, mobile phone numbers were generated completely at random for all major mobile operators in Ukraine. The share of generated numbers assigned to each mobile operator was roughly proportional to that operator's share of all mobile numbers (according to KIIS surveys). Interviewers then called the generated numbers and invited the respondents who answered to take part in the survey.

Only respondents aged 18 and older were interviewed, and only those living in territory controlled by Ukraine (i.e., residents of the temporarily occupied territories were excluded from the sample). Residents of Ukraine who left the country after February 24, 2022, were not surveyed either. Interviews were conducted in Ukrainian or Russian, at the respondent's choice.

After the planned number of completed (full) interviews had been conducted, the resulting distribution of respondents in the sample by macroregion of residence (West, Center, South, East—see the breakdown below), type of settlement (urban or rural), gender, and age was compared with official statistical sources. During the interview, each respondent reported their place of residence before February 24, 2022, as well as their current place of residence (at the time of the interview). For subsequent procedures, we used the place of residence as of February 24, 2022.

The distribution of the entire adult population by macroregion and type of settlement was determined on the basis of Central Election Commission data from the 2019 parliamentary elections (by the number of registered voters). The gender and age structure was determined on the basis of State Statistics Service data as of January 1, 2021. Special statistical weights were constructed to align the sample structure with that of Ukraine's population as a whole. In addition, these weights account for the different probabilities of different respondents being included in the sample (depending on how many different mobile numbers a given respondent has).

The macroregions are composed as follows: the *Western* macroregion—Volyn, Rivne, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil, Zakarpattia, Khmelnytskyi, and Chernivtsi oblasts; the *Central* macroregion—Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Sumy, Chernihiv, Poltava, Kirovohrad, Cherkasy, and Kyiv oblasts and the city of Kyiv; the *Southern* macroregion—Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Kherson, and Odesa oblasts; the *Eastern* macroregion—Donetsk, Luhansk, and Kharkiv oblasts.

Fieldwork took place from October 8 to 25, 2026. In total, 2,005 interviews were conducted.

Formally, under normal circumstances, the statistical sampling error (with a probability of 0.95 and a design effect of 1.3) does not exceed:

- 2.8% for values close to 50%,
- 2.5% for values close to 25% or 75%,
- 1.7% for values close to 10% or 90%,
- 1.2% for values close to 5% or 95%,
- 0.5% for values close to 1% or 99%.

At the same time, for two questions (see Section III and Section V, item 1), the survey included an experiment in which each respondent was read one of three randomly selected versions of the question. As a result, 656–685 respondents answered each version of these questions. For these subsamples, the formal statistical error under normal circumstances (with a probability of 0.95 and a design effect of 1.3) does not exceed:

- 4.9% for values close to 50%,
- 4.3% for values close to 25% or 75%,
- 3.0% for values close to 10% or 90%,
- 2.1% for values close to 5% or 95%,
- 1.0% for values close to 1% or 99%.

Notes on the structure of the report

For region and type of settlement, we use respondents' answers about where they live now, that is, at the time of the interview.

Figures in the report are rounded to whole numbers. In some cases, percentages may not add up to exactly 100% (or the total for the corresponding group of answers) due to rounding.

In addition, when interpreting results for individual categories (particular regions, respondents with different income levels, etc.), keep in mind that because each such category includes fewer respondents than the sample as a whole, the margin of error for it is correspondingly higher. The "overlap" between some sociodemographic categories should also be taken into account. For example, younger respondents are also more likely to have higher education.

The report includes a separate Appendix A, which provides, for each category used to break down the data, the number of respondents, the margin of error, and the sociodemographic profile of that category (for the full sample of 2,005 respondents).

Appendix B contains the questionnaire, with all question wording and instructions.

Please note that this English-language version provides only a summary of the report's key findings and does not include translations of the appendices. Appendices A and B are available in Ukrainian in the full original report.

KEY FINDINGS

SECTION I. SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

- If a referendum on EU accession were held now, 64% of all respondents would vote "for" and 14% would vote "against." The rest would mostly not vote or have not decided. Thus, among those who would take part in the vote, 82% would cast their ballots "for."
- At the same time, support for EU accession has declined recently. As recently as May 2026, 70% of all respondents supported EU accession, but by October 2026 the figure had fallen to 64%.
- Although support for EU accession decreases somewhat from West to East (from 69% to 55% of all respondents), in all regions a majority of the adult population is ready to support European integration in a referendum.

SECTION II. POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF UKRAINE'S EU ACCESSION

- From a list of 10 possible positive consequences of EU accession, membership is associated above all with freedom for Ukrainian citizens to travel, study, and work in the EU (38% placed it among the top 3 consequences of Ukraine's EU membership), protection against renewed Russian aggression (38%), economic prosperity (35%), and the rule of law and independent courts (31%). Overall, 93% of respondents see at least one positive consequence of EU membership for Ukraine.
- Among those who would vote "against" in a referendum, 76% were able to name at least one positive consequence of EU membership. Among those who would not vote in a referendum, 92% were able to name at least one positive consequence of EU membership.
- From a list of 7 possible negative consequences of EU accession, membership is associated above all with intrusive political correctness and the imposition of values and rules imposed on Ukrainians (35%), bureaucracy and lengthy decision-making (34%), and limits on Ukraine's sovereignty and EU interference in its internal affairs (30%). These are followed by immigration to Ukraine of people from culturally different countries (25%) and Ukrainians leaving the country (20%).
- Among those who would support EU accession in a referendum, 83% named at least one negative consequence. Most often (in first place) they mentioned bureaucracy and the imposition of values and rules, followed (in second place) by immigration to Ukraine, limits on sovereignty, and Ukrainians leaving the country.

SECTION III. ATTITUDES TOWARD DIFFICULT REFORMS FOR EU ACCESSION

- Of all respondents, 74% believe that even if reforms for EU accession are not supported by the majority of the population, they should still be carried out, while only

18% believe that, in that case, they should be abandoned (even if this jeopardizes European integration).

- When reforms may conflict with how national security is ensured, 66% favor continuing the reforms and 25% say such reforms should be abandoned.
- Support for continuing reforms is the lowest of the three when the reforms do not align with Ukrainians' cultural traditions. In this case, 57% support carrying out the reforms, while 33% oppose them.
- Among those who would support Ukraine's EU accession in a referendum, the majority believe that reforms should be carried out regardless of any of the difficulties or problems examined (from 71% in the case of cultural traditions to 87% in the case of unpopularity with the population). Among those who would vote "against" in a referendum, opinions are evenly split on whether the reforms are unpopular with the population, but the majority believe that reforms should be abandoned if they conflict with national security and/or do not align with cultural traditions.
- The situation is more complicated among those who would not vote (there are too few undecided respondents in the sample for a statistically reliable analysis, so we do not present them). Among non-voters, when reforms are unpopular with the population, both views (continue the reforms or abandon them) are common, but those who believe the reforms should still be carried out have the edge. The situation is similar with national security: there is a small advantage for those who believe the reforms should be carried out (although there are also many opponents). In the case of reforms that conflict with cultural traditions, by contrast, slightly more respondents favor abandoning the reforms.

SECTION IV. PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA AND PRIVACY

- Overall, 89% of respondents said it is important to them that their personal data and privacy be protected. Of these, 64% said it is "very" important (for the remaining 25%, it is "somewhat" important).
- At the same time, when asked whether they trust Ukrainian government institutions to protect personal data, 55% said they trust them, while 42% said they do not.

SECTION V. UKRAINIANS IN THE TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

- Regarding Ukrainians in the territories occupied since 2022, 74% have a broadly positive perception (seeing them as hostages of life circumstances or of the occupying forces), while 16% have a broadly negative one (seeing them as opportunists, passive supporters of the "Russian world," or traitors). Compared with 2023, attitudes have not changed.
- Regarding residents of the areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions occupied in 2014–2015, 62% have a broadly positive perception and 25% a broadly negative one. Compared with 2023, the share of those with a broadly positive perception has risen from 51% to 62% (while the share of those with a broadly negative perception has fallen from 37% to 25%).
- Regarding residents of Crimea, 61% have a broadly positive perception and 26% a broadly negative one. Compared with 2023, the share of those with a broadly positive

perception has risen from 48% to 61% (while the share of those with a broadly negative perception has fallen from 38% to 26%).

- Respondents were presented with a list of 7 possible actions that Ukraine could take regarding people in the temporarily occupied territory. Most often, respondents chose options indicating that Ukraine should support people under occupation. Thus, 38% chose the option of developing a state program to encourage their relocation to Ukrainian-controlled territory, and 38% chose the option of supporting children so that they can leave to study in Ukrainian-controlled territory. These are followed by developing educational and information programs to support them (17%) and developing a policy of diverse support, including financial support (17%). Respondents least often chose options involving punishment of Ukrainians under occupation: 7% said that the majority should be convicted of collaboration, 6% that their rights should be restricted, and 3% that they should be stripped of Ukrainian citizenship.
- When the answers are grouped, the majority of respondents—66%—chose only answers indicating that people under occupation should be supported. Only 7% chose only answers involving punishment. Another 9% chose answers of both kinds.
- Even among those who have a broadly negative perception of people under occupation, about half or more say that Ukraine should support them (counting both those who gave “only” such answers and those who mentioned both support and punishment).

THE HUMAN RIGHTS DIMENSION OF THE PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY ON EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

This survey, "EU Accession and Human Rights: Support and Understanding of the Conditions," was conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) in October 2026 at the request of the Center for Civil Liberties (CCL).

Fall 2026 marked the point at which Ukraine's European integration shifted from declarations to real negotiations. After all member states gave the go-ahead on June 12, the first negotiating cluster, "Fundamentals," was opened on June 15, and the "External Relations" cluster followed on July 14.[1] Then, on October 13, the "Internal Market" and "Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth" clusters were added; the European Commission considers the remaining clusters ready to be opened.[2] In its November 4 enlargement report, the Commission placed Ukraine among the four countries that have made the most progress, while cautioning that reforms will have to speed up if negotiations are to be concluded by the end of 2028.[3]

Two caveats are essential for a human rights reading of this survey. First, residents of the temporarily occupied territories (TOT) were not surveyed, so the data on attitudes toward people under occupation reflect the views of people living in government-controlled areas of Ukraine toward those on the other side of the front line, rather than the perspectives of those living under occupation. Second, the sample did not include those who went abroad after February 24, 2022. These are millions of people for whom freedom of movement within the EU has already become part of everyday life and who already live in the EU. This will matter a great deal if elections or referendums are held, since the breakdown of responses would then be different—something this survey cannot measure precisely.

Support for Accession: Still a Majority, but No Longer Unquestioning

The survey found that a majority (over 60%) support joining the EU. This figure is lower than in previous years. Support for accession is declining.

However, it would be premature to speak of a growing "Euroskeptic" camp. In our view, this is more a matter of growing public fatigue and a rising number of people who have lost the most because of the war and therefore feel least connected to a European future.

Researchers have noted that the more concrete and politicized integration becomes, the sooner a "permissive consensus" gives way to a "constraining dissensus," and support

[1] Ukraine opens the first cluster of EU accession negotiations (in Ukrainian) // Government Portal. 2026. June 12. URL: https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/ukraina-vidkryvaie-pershyi-klaster-perehovoriv-pro-vstup-do-ies; Ukraine and the EU officially open negotiations on Cluster 6 "External Relations" (in Ukrainian) // Government Portal. 2026. July 14. URL: https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/ukraina-ta-ievrosoiuz-ofitsiino-vidkryly-peremovyny-za-klasterom-6-zovnishni-vidnosyny

[2] European Commission. Ukraine 2026 Report: Communication on EU enlargement policy. Brussels, 4.11.2026. URL: https://euneighbourseast.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/11/ukraine-report-2026.pdf (hereinafter, Ukraine 2026 Report).

[3] 2026 Enlargement Package shows that reform commitment delivers progress towards EU membership // Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine. 2026. Nov. 4. URL: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/2026-enlargement-package-shows-reform-commitment-delivers-progress-towards-eu-membership_en; EU Enlargement Package: Ukraine Report 2026 // EU Neighbours East. 2026. URL: https://euneighbourseast.eu/news/publications/eu-enlargement-package-ukraine-report-2026/

grounded in identity becomes conditional.[4] The euphoria and unity of 2022 are gradually giving way to the mundane reality of postponed reforms and the real costs of war. Moreover, in other countries, support gradually declined as accession progressed. It is also reasonable to assume that support for EU integration reforms, and for accession in general, depends heavily on how real the prospect of EU membership actually is.[5] Amid widespread fatigue and the hardships of war, it is difficult to remain optimistic about accession and to see it as realistic—and therefore worth the effort.

What Ukrainians Expect from Europe: Security, Mobility, and Justice

Of those surveyed, 93% named at least one positive consequence of membership. The most frequently cited were:

1) freedom to travel, study, and work in the EU (38%);
2) protection against renewed Russian aggression (38%);
3) economic prosperity (35%);
4) the rule of law and independent courts (31%).

Higher standards of human rights and freedoms were mentioned by 15%, freedom of speech by 14%, the rights of persons with disabilities by 13%, the strengthening of democracy by 11%, and the rights of national minorities and linguistic communities by only 4%. Even among opponents of accession, 76% see at least one benefit of membership.

This hierarchy broadly confirms the “utilitarian” model of support for integration described by Matthew Gabel: people assess membership through the lens of expected benefits.[6] There is one small difference, however: the rule of law still retains its weight and significance. The rule of law (chosen by 31% overall and by 44% of those with higher education) encompasses both values and institutions. It echoes the demand for justice that has driven Ukrainian civil society at least since the Revolution of Dignity, if not since the Orange Revolution.

Somewhat surprisingly, the opportunity to move to EU countries—particularly for children, to study and work there—ranks first. This is especially notable given that more than 4 million Ukrainians have left for the EU since 2022. This may be linked to the uncertain future facing Ukraine itself, whereas the EU looks more predictable for future generations. That said, this assumption is fairly debatable. On the other hand, Ukraine as an EU member would clearly become more attractive, for example, to residents of the temporarily occupied territories, since membership is associated with better jobs and education.

The modest 15% for human rights does not mean that rights are unimportant: more likely, in the public mind it is one’s own state that should guarantee them, and this is not expected specifically from the European integration process or the EU. Yet the EU has considerable leverage over Ukrainian authorities to improve the human rights situation. What people

[4] Hooghe L., Marks G. A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus // British Journal of Political Science. 2009. Vol. 39, No. 1. P. 1–23. DOI: 10.1017/S0007123408000409.

[5] See, for example, the following study, which links the success of reforms in candidate countries to how realistic the prospect of membership is: Schimmelfennig F., Sedelmeier U. Governance by conditionality: EU rule transfer to the candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe // Journal of European Public Policy. 2004. Vol. 11, No. 4. P. 661–679. DOI: 10.1080/1350176042000248089.

[6] Gabel M. Public Support for European Integration: An Empirical Test of Five Theories // The Journal of Politics. 1998. Vol. 60, No. 2. P. 333–354.

expect from Europe, to a greater extent, is what is most acutely lacking: prosperity, security, and independent courts.

One of the most telling findings of the survey is the high level of trust in the European Union as a future guarantor of respect for human rights in Ukraine. Although only 15% of respondents consider higher human rights standards one of the three most important positive consequences of membership, 68% said they would trust the EU to uphold these standards after Ukraine joins. At the same time, only 14% expressed complete trust.

This discrepancy may indicate that citizens do not necessarily perceive human rights as a distinct benefit of European integration, but that human rights remain an important part of what they expect from European institutions. At the same time, EU membership does not replace the responsibility of national authorities for ensuring human rights; rather, it creates additional legal and institutional mechanisms to protect them in areas where EU law applies.

The extremely low 4% for minority rights deserves special attention. Respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, is a founding value of the Union (Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union) and a condition of membership (Article 49).[7] Bilateral interstate disputes have politicized the issue and appear to be perceived as an external demand, even though the Commission notes that Ukraine's legal framework for protecting minorities is largely in place and stresses, above all, the consistent implementation of the updated action plan.[8] For Ukraine, the rights of minorities and Indigenous peoples are not a concession to its neighbors but a safeguard for Crimean Tatars and for every citizen who may find themselves in the minority in certain situations. This issue appears to call for additional communication between the authorities and the public.

It is also worth emphasizing that human rights most often protect precisely the minority, something the majority may frequently fail to accept. Yet it is precisely these rights that guard against arbitrary rule by the majority, and they must therefore be ensured regardless of the majority's opinions or expectations. This is no easy process in an electoral democracy, which underscores the importance of accompanying reforms with communication.

The abolition of the death penalty in Ukraine is a good case in point. In the 1990s, more than 60% of people supported capital punishment, and for a long time the government cited this to justify not abolishing it. However, joining the Council of Europe required at least a moratorium on its use. The Constitutional Court of Ukraine then ruled the death penalty unconstitutional, and a few years later it was simply left out of the Criminal Code when the new code was adopted. In effect, it was abolished in defiance of public opinion. Yet since then, support for the death penalty in Ukraine has declined, with recent surveys putting it at only 29% to 44%. This shows that introducing certain human rights standards, even ones that are unpopular at a given moment, can change public opinion over time once the anticipated threats fail to materialize.

That is precisely why the EU regards the protection of minorities as one of the key elements of democracy and, therefore, a prerequisite for joining the EU.

The Downsides of Accession: "Imposed

[7] Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union. Art. 2, 49 // EUR-Lex. URL: https://europam.eu/data/mechanisms/FOI/FOI%20Laws/European%20Union/1.%20TEU%20and%20TFEU_ENG,%20consolidated%202016.pdf.

[8] Ukraine 2026 Report (Chapter 23 "Judiciary and Fundamental Rights").

Values," Bureaucracy, and Sovereignty

Of all respondents, 84% named at least one negative consequence of membership, including 83% of accession supporters:

1) "intrusive political correctness, imposition of values and rules perceived as foreign to Ukrainian society" (35%);
2) bureaucracy (34%);
3) limits on sovereignty (30%);
4) immigration from culturally different countries (25%);
5) emigration of Ukrainians (20%).

Among opponents of accession, fears about sovereignty (49%) and values (48%) predominate; concerns about losing sovereignty are voiced more often by residents of the South (36%) and the East (38%).

The fact that the vast majority of accession supporters see risks is, in our view, a sign not of naivety but of mature Europeanism. Concerns about bureaucracy are familiar to member states as well, and the sovereignty concerns of a country fighting precisely for its sovereignty are understandable, although for small and medium-sized states, EU membership tends to enhance rather than diminish their ability to defend their own interests.

From a human rights perspective, the most significant of these is the fear of "imposed values." It is not marginal: 32% of accession supporters share it, too. In our view, at least two layers should be distinguished within it. The first consists of real disagreements on specific issues: in 2025, 78% of Ukrainians agreed that LGBT people should have the same rights as other citizens, but society is divided on registered civil partnerships, with 30% in favor, 35% against, and another 30% indifferent.[9] The Commission, for its part, notes that same-sex couples still have no legal recognition despite the European Court of Human Rights judgment in *Maymulakhin and Markiv v. Ukraine*.[10] The second layer is an ideological construct: the Russian state has made the protection of "traditional values" a strategic national security priority, naming among the threats to them, in particular, the actions of the United States and other "unfriendly" states.[11] A respondent who fears "imposed values" may unwittingly be reproducing precisely this frame. The answer cannot be to deny the disagreements; it is more persuasive to show that the core of "European values" is dignity, equality, and nondiscrimination, which are already enshrined in the Constitution of Ukraine[12] and in Ukraine's obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights, which bind it regardless of EU membership. These values are not "imposed "; they are already ours. Clearly, these issues require further public debate, but in all likelihood politicians will keep stoking them to reap political dividends, regardless of the harm this may cause.

The Price of Reform

[9] Perceptions of LGBT people and their rights in Ukraine, September 2025: Analytical report (in Ukrainian) / KIIS, commissioned by Nash Svit Center. Kyiv, 2025. URL: https://gay.org.ua/publications/AReport_NashSvit_21Oct2025.pdf

[10] Ukraine 2026 Report (Chapter 23); ECtHR. Maymulakhin and Markiv v. Ukraine, Application No. 75135/14, judgment of June 1, 2023, https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/974_i96#Text

[11] Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 809 of November 9, 2022, "On approval of the Fundamentals of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values" (in Russian). URL: https://consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_law_430906

[12] Constitution of Ukraine. Art. 3, 21, 24, https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254%D0%BA/96-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text

Overall, the majority supports carrying out the necessary reforms, even if they are not particularly popular.

The majority's willingness to support EU integration reforms even when they are publicly contested is a positive sign. At the same time, fundamental human rights cannot depend solely on public support. The prohibition of discrimination, protection from torture, the right to a fair trial, and other fundamental guarantees are legal obligations of the state, not a matter of political expediency. Public communication should therefore not only increase support for reforms but also explain that they are mandatory and why they matter for protecting every person.

In our view, the responses in this part can be interpreted as indicating that the way particular reforms are presented to the public matters greatly. One may recall the classic framing effect described by Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman:[13] the gap between 74% and 57% arises solely from how the "price" of reform is described. The results demonstrate how strongly support for reforms can depend on the trade-offs through which they are presented to the public.

If human rights reforms, legislation on hate crimes and on civil partnerships, which the Commission considers urgent, and further alignment of antidiscrimination rules with EU law[14], are framed as "anti-traditional," a third of society would rather give them up, even at the cost of accession. If, however, they are presented as protecting the dignity and safety of every person, the frame shifts, and so do perceptions and, accordingly, attitudes.

In wartime, the "security" frame acts as the strongest veto on reforms. But European standards do not dismiss security; rather, they require restrictions on rights to be necessary and proportionate. The Commission assesses martial law restrictions as generally proportionate but recommends that they continue to be tested against these criteria.[15] Still, the security frame explains, for example, why reforms of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) and law enforcement agencies keep being postponed.

Privacy: Demand for Protection Outpaces Trust

Protection of personal data and privacy is important to 89% of respondents, and "very" important to 64%; among young people aged 18–29, the figure is 74%. At the same time, 55% trust government institutions to protect personal data properly (only 12% fully), while 42% do not. People aged 30–59 are the most critical.

The 34% gap between the importance attached to privacy and trust in the state has institutional causes.[16] The current Law on Personal Data Protection was adopted in 2010, before the EU General Data Protection Regulation. It does not meet European standards, is obsolete, and in practice does not actually guarantee the protection of personal data. Parliament approved a new version (Bill No. 8153[17]) in the first reading on November 20, 2024, but as of mid-2026 it was still being revised, while establishing an independent

[13] Tversky A., Kahneman D. The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology of Choice // Science. 1981. Vol. 211, No. 4481. P. 453–458. DOI: 10.1126/science.7455683.

[14] Ukraine 2026 Report (Chapters 19, 23).

[15] Ukraine 2026 Report (Chapter 23).

[16] For a more detailed overview of the problems and ways to address them in the context of European integration, see the Human Rights Reforms Map for Ukraine's EU Integration: https://eurointegration.ccl.org.ua/povaga-do-pryvatnogo-zhyttya/

[17] https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/40707

supervisory authority remained a commitment under the “Fundamentals” cluster.[18] The Commission considers both the legal framework and the supervisory capacity insufficient: the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights can only identify violations and initiate proceedings, whereas EU standards, including Article 8 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, require independent oversight with real powers. As we can see, even the trust that people do place in the state is largely given on credit, without a real assessment or understanding of how well personal data are protected. Yet public demand for privacy is quite strong.

Meanwhile, the state is building integrated personal data repositories, and the number of databases is growing rapidly. The state collects a great deal of information about people, yet there are no detailed rules governing how this data is to be stored and used. The Law on the Unified Information System of the Social Sphere,[19] in force since May 27, 2026, brings together more than thirty registers and provides for a “social history” of every individual.[20] Specialized media have highlighted data exchange with the Oberih register of persons liable for military service, the health care system, and data on border crossings, taxes, and property.[21] Without an independent oversight body, such integration and the unchecked use of personal data multiply the risks. In wartime, privacy is a matter of security: a data leak can cost people their freedom or their lives, especially those whose relatives remain under occupation and the families of military personnel.

People Under Occupation: From Suspicion to Solidarity

At first glance, this part of the survey is not about European integration. In our view, however, policy toward people under occupation will be one of the most important factors in Ukraine’s social and political development, since several million voters live there. This policy will also matter for the prospects of preserving Ukrainian cultural and national identity in the occupied territories and for the possibility of regaining them in the future.

The question asking how respondents see the majority of Ukrainian citizens who remain in the TOT was worded exactly as in OPORA’s 2023 survey, which allows for comparison.[22]

Attitudes toward people in the territories occupied since 2022 remain consistently sympathetic, while attitudes toward residents of the “old” occupied territories (occupied since 2014) have warmed noticeably. Only 3–7% of respondents regard most people under occupation as “traitors,” and young people show the greatest empathy: among 18- to 29-year-olds, positive perceptions of residents of the territories occupied since 2022 reach 86%.

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[18] Ukraine is to establish a new personal data protection institution: Why it matters (in Ukrainian), https://zmina.info/news/v-ukrayini-mayut-stvoryty-novu-instytucziyu-iz-zahystu-personalnyh-danyh-chomu-cze-vazhlyvo/

[19] https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4607-20#Text

[20] Social sector reform 2026: Law No. 4607-IX in effect since May 27 (in Ukrainian) // Debet-Kredyt. 2026. URL: https://news.dtkt.ua/labor/social-protection/111489-reforma-socialnoyi-sferi-2026-z-27-travnia-zapraciuvav-zakon-4607-ix

[21] Rada blocks signing of the law on pooling citizens’ personal data from all registers into the Unified Social Sphere System (in Ukrainian) // Sudovo-yurydychna hazeta. 2025. URL: https://sud.ua/uk/news/publication/341703-v-rade-zablokirovali-podpisanie-zakona-o-sbore-personalnykh-dannykh-grazhdan-iz-vsekh-reestrov-v-edinuyu-sistemu-sotsialnoy-sfery

[22] Ukrainians’ attitudes toward those who remained in the TOT—OPORA survey results (in Ukrainian) // Civil Network OPORA. 2023. URL: https://oporaua.org/viyna/stavlennya-ukrayinciv-do-tih-hto-zalishivsya-na-TOT-24870.

Nevertheless, one in four still views these people negatively, and the stigma of the past decade has not disappeared.

Describing residents of the occupied territories as “hostages” reflects a documented reality. According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), between December 2025 and May 2026 the occupied territory continued to see restrictions on freedom of expression, torture, arbitrary detention, violations of the right to a fair trial, forced conscription of protected persons, a ban on Ukrainian school curricula, and compulsory “military-patriotic” classes.[23] In March 2026, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine concluded that the deportation and forcible transfer of Ukrainian children, as well as their enforced disappearance, amount to crimes against humanity; of the 1,205 cases examined, about 80% of the children have still not returned.[24] A decree of the Russian president equated residents of the TOT without Russian passports with “foreigners” who had to “legalize” their status by September 10, 2025, or face expulsion.[25]

International humanitarian law (IHL) prohibits the forcible transfer and deportation of protected persons, compelling them to serve in the occupier’s armed forces, and even propaganda aimed at securing “voluntary” enlistment (Articles 49 and 51 of the Fourth Geneva Convention), as well as compelling the population to swear allegiance to the hostile power (Article 45 of the 1907 Hague Regulations).[26] Ukraine’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs stresses that being forced to obtain a Russian passport does not change a person’s status as a citizen of Ukraine,[27] and the European Commission calls for particular attention to the protection of Ukrainians in the TOT, above all children born under occupation who are being forced to accept Russian citizenship.[28]

So what does society expect from the state? Above all, support: 38% each chose a state program to encourage relocation to government-controlled territory and support for children so that they can go there to study, and 17% each chose educational and information programs and a policy of diverse support, including financial support. Punitive options were rarely chosen: 7% favored convicting the majority for collaborative activity, 6% restricting their rights, and 3% stripping them of citizenship. When responses are grouped, 66% chose support measures only, 9% chose both support and punishment, and 7% chose punishment only; among young people, the share choosing “support only” reaches 78%. Even among those who view people under occupation negatively, more than half choose support measures, either on their own or alongside punishment.

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[23] UN report details increase in civilian deaths amid systematic strikes on energy facilities // United Nations Ukraine. 2026. June 29. URL: https://ukraine.un.org/en/node/318395

[24] UN Commission concludes that deportation and forcible transfer of Ukrainian children by Russian authorities, as well as enforced disappearances, amount to crimes against humanity // United Nations Ukraine. 2026. March 12. URL: https://ukraine.un.org/en/node/311741; Eighty percent of deported or forcibly displaced Ukrainian children remain in Russia: UN Commission // ZMINA. 2026. URL: https://zmina.info/en/news-en/eighty-percent-of-deported-or-forcibly-displaced-ukrainian-children-remain-in-russia-un-commission/

[25] Deportation or a Russian passport: Deadline under Putin’s decree for Ukrainians in the TOT expires today (in Ukrainian) // Kyiv Post. 2025. Sept. 10. URL: https://www.kyivpost.com/uk/post/59742

[26] Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949. Art. 49, 51 // ICRC IHL Databases. URL: https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/article-51; Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land (Annex to Hague Convention IV of 1907). Art. 45.

[27] Ukraine will not change its attitude toward people under occupation who were forced to take Russian passports—MFA (in Ukrainian) // LIGA.net. 2025. March 21. URL: https://news.liga.net/ua/all/news/ukraina-ne-zminyt-stavlennia-do-liudey-v-okupatsii-iakykh-zmusyly-vziaty-pasporty-rosii-mzs

[28] Ukraine 2026 Report (Chapter 23).

Here, public opinion proves closer to IHL than the state's criminal justice policy is. According to the ZMINA Human Rights Center, as of the end of 2025, the register of court decisions contained 3,103 verdicts under Article 111-1 of the Criminal Code ("Collaborative Activity"). Under several parts of the article, more than 80% of cases were tried in absentia. Courts often consider the mere fact of holding a position sufficient, without examining the person's actual functions, while simply remaining in the occupied territory may itself be treated as proof of voluntariness. IHL standards are applied insufficiently.[29] At the same time, the Fourth Geneva Convention allows an occupying power to compel civilians over 18 years of age to perform work necessary for public utility services, the feeding of the population, or its health care,[30] so prosecuting people for such work blurs the line between survival and complicity. When only 7% of citizens want the "majority" to be convicted, a law that could criminalize everyday survival strategies loses public support. The legislation on liability for collaboration therefore needs to be amended—not to grant "leniency toward collaborators," but to bring justice in line with IHL and society's moral intuition: accountability for actual crimes, not for having stayed at home.

The demand for relocation and education programs for young people also resonates with OHCHR's thematic report on forced displacement from the TOT: people displaced from there face problems with documents in Ukraine, nonrecognition of their education and employment history, and limited access to housing compensation, while peace negotiations, in OHCHR's view, should provide for their voluntary, safe, and dignified return.[31] The survey results lend democratic legitimacy to putting the release of civilians held captive in Russia, the return of deported children, and guarantees for the rights of TOT residents at the heart of any negotiation process.

Conclusions

1) **Ukraine's European choice is resilient, but no longer self-evident.** The drop in support from 70% to 64% points to fatigue with uncertainty and doubts about the sincerity of both sides rather than to a rejection of Europe. Poland's experience shows that the "negotiation slump" passes when the prospect of membership remains credible and the government honors its commitments and backs them up with reforms.
2) **The state's communication policy on EU accession is becoming increasingly important.** Public sentiment needs to be sustained, and it is important not to pit EU integration reforms against certain socially important interests, particularly with regard to culture and security.
3) **Human rights should be explained as "ours," not "imposed."** It is the "cultural" frame that most strongly undermines readiness for reform, so the argument that dignity, equality, and nondiscrimination are already enshrined in Ukraine's Constitution and international obligations is more persuasive than references to "Brussels' demands."
4) **Reforms in high public demand should come first.** Privacy matters to 89% of citizens, yet there is still no independent data protection authority; a new law and an

[29] Deputat D., Syniuk O., Demura M. Four years of "prevention": What problems remain in the practice of holding individuals accountable for collaborative activity in 2025? (in Ukrainian) / ed. by A. Lunyova. Kyiv: ZMINA Human Rights Center, 2026. 80 p. URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2026/04/colab_web_ukr.pdf

[30] Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Art. 51 (2) // ICRC IHL Databases. URL: https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/article-51

[31] Forced displacement from territory of Ukraine occupied by the Russian Federation: forcible transfer and deportation, barriers to return, and the rights of internally displaced persons (24 February 2022 – 31 December 2025) / OHCHR. 2026. March 20. URL: https://ukraine.un.org/en/312299-forced-displacement-territory-ukraine-occupied-russian-federation-forcible-transfer-and

independent regulator would both bring Ukraine closer to the EU and strengthen trust in the state. The same goes for judicial reform and reform of the prosecution service.

5) **Policy toward people under occupation should be grounded in international humanitarian law (IHL) and in the solidarity that society demonstrates:** amending Article 111-1 of the Criminal Code, relocation and education programs for young people from the TOT, nondiscrimination against displaced persons, and prioritizing the release of civilians and the return of children in any negotiations.

6) **Groups with lower support for EU accession should not be "persuaded" but included** in recovery policies and in public dialogue about Europe and a shared future.

The October 2026 survey reveals a society that does not idealize Europe but does not turn its back on it either. This society is willing to pay the price of reform when it understands its purpose and that, despite the war, mostly sees people on the other side of the front line not as enemies but as hostages. It is this, and not geopolitics alone, that forms the most solid foundation for Ukraine's European integration.

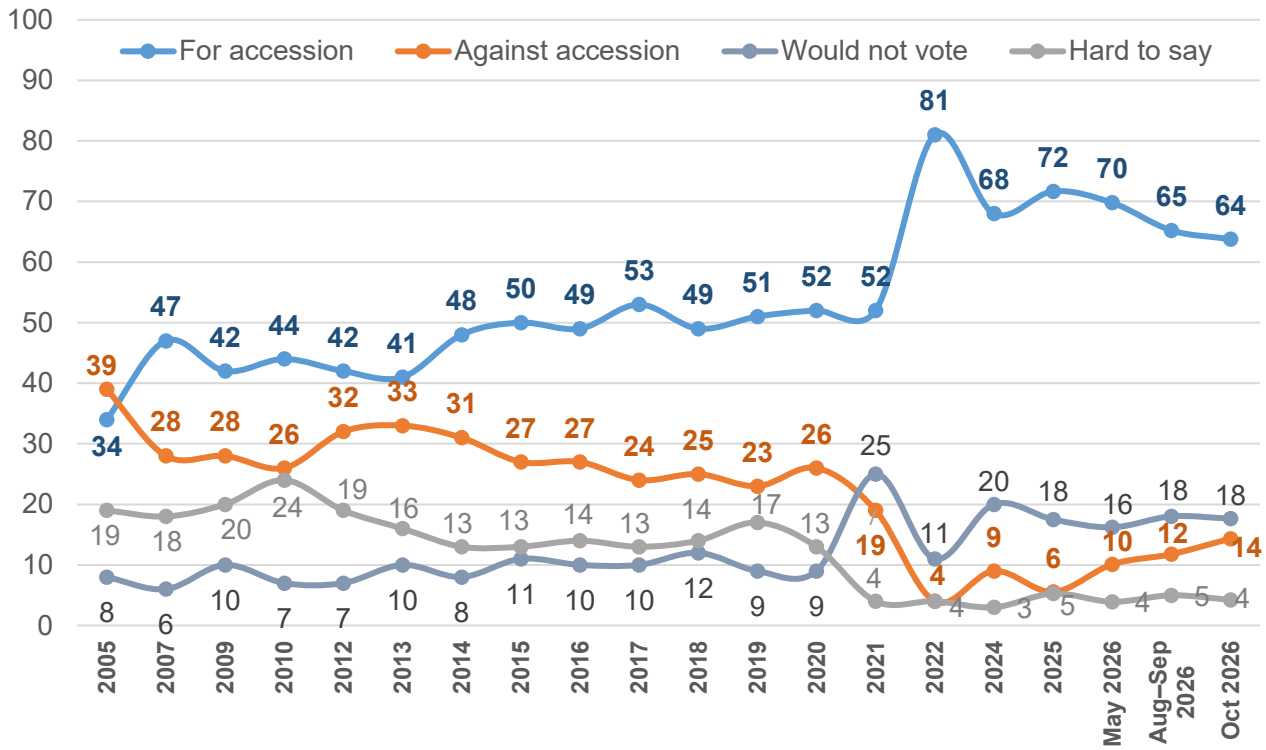
SECTION I. SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Respondents were first asked how they would vote in a hypothetical referendum on EU accession. KIIS has been asking this question for more than 20 years, so in addition to current attitudes, we can assess trends, particularly over the recent period.

As the chart below shows, first, the majority of Ukrainians would support EU accession in a referendum. Of all respondents, 64% would vote "for" and 14% "against" (the rest would not vote or have not decided). Among those who would take part in the vote, 82% would cast their ballots "for."

Second, however, we are seeing a decline in support for EU accession. After a surge to 81% in 2022 (as a share of all respondents), the figure remained between 68% and 72% until May 2026. **As recently as May 2026, 70% of all respondents would have voted "for" (with 10% "against"), but by August–September the KIIS survey showed a drop to 65%. Now, in October, it stands at 64%** (the difference from August–September is within the margin of error, but this is a new survey confirming the trend observed earlier). At the same time, from May to October, the share of accession opponents specifically grew from 10% to 14%.

Chart I.1 Please imagine that a referendum is being held right now on whether Ukraine should join the European Union. You can vote for joining this union, against joining, or abstain—that is, not take part in the vote. What is your choice?



It is also worth adding that in May 2026, KIIS conducted a survey commissioned by Ukraine2EU and in cooperation with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine, in which respondents who were ready to vote "for" in a referendum were asked an additional question: "How strongly do you support Ukraine's accession to the EU?" Among those who answered "for" (taken as 100%), fewer than half (44%) said they support it "very strongly." Another 46% gave the less confident answer "somewhat strongly." For the remaining 10%, it is not very important.[32]

The table below presents the data broken down by the population's sociodemographic categories. It is worth noting that although support for EU accession decreases somewhat from West to East (from 69% to 55%), a majority of the adult population in all regions is ready to support European integration in a referendum.

Among other things, it is worth noting that support for EU accession is higher among men (69% compared with 59% among women), non-IDPs (65% compared with 51% among IDP respondents), respondents with higher education (70% compared with 60% among those with specialized secondary or vocational education and 57% among those with complete secondary education or less), Ukrainian-speaking respondents (69% compared with 60% among those who speak both languages at home and 49% among Russian-speaking respondents), and respondents with middle and high incomes (67% and 70%, respectively, compared with 57% among low-income respondents).

Overall, in every category, the share of those ready to vote "for" is higher than the share of those who would vote "against."

Table I.1 Voting in a referendum on EU accession, by sociodemographic category

100% per row	For	Against	Would not vote	Undecided
Region				
West	69	12	15	3
Center	65	14	17	4
South	58	16	21	5
East	55	19	19	7
Gender				
Male	69	14	13	3
Female	59	14	22	5
Age				
18–29 years	66	11	22	2

[32] Survey: Most Ukrainians support EU accession (in Ukrainian) // https://kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1630&page=4

100% per row	For	Against	Would not vote	Undecided
30–39 years	64	14	17	5
40–49 years	58	17	23	3
50–59 years	61	20	15	4
60–69 years	66	14	16	4
70+ years	70	9	13	8
IDP status				
Non-IDP	65	14	17	4
IDP	51	21	21	7
Type of settlement				
Village	64	11	22	3
Urban-type settlement / under 20,000	63	14	18	5
City of 20,000–99,000	54	21	20	5
City of 100,000 or more	66	15	14	5
Education				
Complete secondary or lower	57	15	21	6
Vocational or specialized secondary	60	16	21	3
Higher	70	13	13	4
Main occupation				
Blue-collar worker	55	18	23	4
Non-manual work not requiring higher education	63	18	17	2
Professional	69	14	14	3
Entrepreneur, farmer, self-employed	65	13	16	5
Military, police	63	16	14	7
Homemaker	51	11	34	4
Retired	67	14	14	5
Student	72	10	16	2
Unemployed	68	10	16	5
Language spoken at home				
Ukrainian	69	11	17	3
Russian	49	27	17	8
Ukrainian and Russian	60	17	20	4
Household income				
Low	57	16	21	6
Middle	67	13	17	3
High	70	14	13	3

SECTION II. POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF UKRAINE'S EU ACCESSION

II.1 Positive Consequences of EU Accession

During the interview, respondents were presented with a list of 10 possible positive consequences of Ukraine's EU membership and asked to choose up to 3 that they most associate with membership.

Overall, 93% of respondents named at least one positive consequence of EU membership. Only 3% of respondents said there would be no positive consequences at all.

Respondents most often ranked the following among the top positive consequences: freedom for Ukrainian citizens to travel, study, and work in the EU (38%), protection against renewed Russian aggression (38%), economic prosperity (35%), and the rule of law and independent courts (31%).

Other positive consequences were placed among the top 3 by fewer respondents, though still by quite a few: 11–15% each mentioned higher standards of human rights and freedoms, freedom of speech and media independence, the rights of persons with disabilities, safety, and the strengthening of democracy. The fewest respondents mentioned the rights of national minorities and linguistic communities (4%).

The table below presents the results broken down by how respondents would vote in a referendum on EU accession. Among those who would support EU accession in a referendum, the same top 4 consequences predominate (freedom of movement, protection against Russian aggression, economic prosperity, and the rule of law).

Among those who would vote "against" in a referendum, 76% were able to name at least one positive consequence of EU membership. For this group, the freedom to travel, study, and work in the EU ranks roughly first (there is no clear second place, but overall, quite a few of these respondents named other consequences). Among those who would not vote in a referendum, 92% were able to name at least one positive consequence of EU membership. For them, too, freedom to travel, study, and work in the EU ranks roughly first, with protection against Russian aggression roughly second.

Among those undecided about how they would vote in a referendum, 94% were able to name at least one positive consequence of EU membership. These respondents stand out in that economic prosperity was the positive consequence they named most often, followed, by a fairly wide margin, by freedom to travel, study, and work in the EU, protection against Russian aggression, and the rule of law, which shared second place.

Table II.1.1 Positive consequences most associated with EU membership, by how respondents would vote in a referendum on EU accession

% per column	For	Against	Would not vote	Undecided
Freedom for Ukrainian citizens to travel, study, and work in the EU	38	35	44	30
Protection against renewed Russian aggression	43	21	35	28
Economic prosperity, higher incomes, and a higher standard of living	40	18	26	46
Rule of law and independent courts	37	17	20	27
Higher standards of human rights and freedoms	18	9	10	13
Freedom of speech and media independence	15	14	13	11
Rights of persons with disabilities and accessible environments	10	14	18	20
Safety and security, lower crime	13	7	13	10
Stronger democracy and rule by the people	13	7	10	6
Rights of national minorities and linguistic communities	4	7	4	0
Other	0	1	1	0
EU membership will have no positive consequences	0	17	2	0
Hard to say	3	7	6	6

The table below presents the results broken down by sociodemographic category. In every category, at least 89% were able to name at least one positive consequence of EU membership, and in almost all cases the same four consequences were named most often.

At the same time, the emphasis may differ somewhat across categories. For example, the freedom to travel, study, and work in the EU was mentioned more often by respondents under 50 (especially those aged 30–39). Some other distinctive features can also be seen.

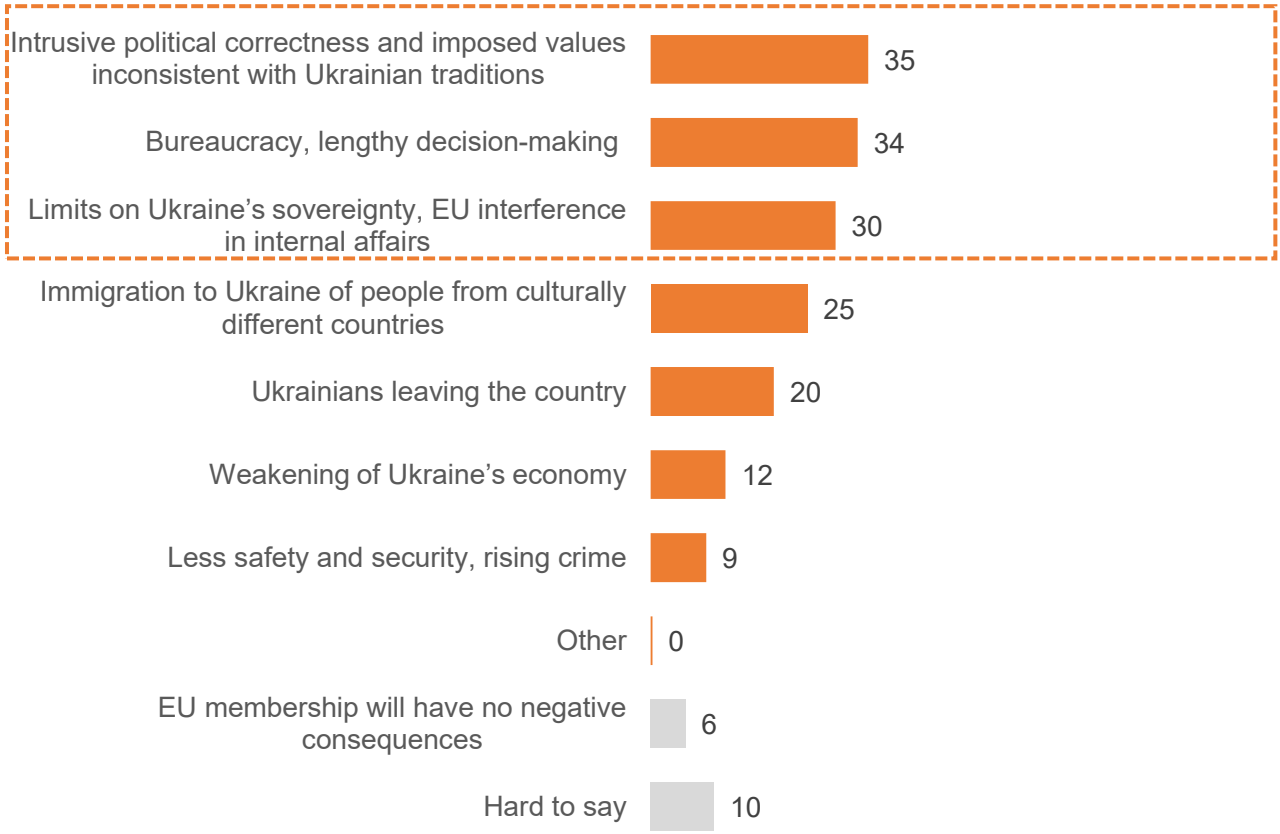
II.2 Negative Consequences of EU Accession

During the interview, respondents were also read a list of 7 possible negative consequences of Ukraine's EU membership and asked to choose up to 3 answers that they most associate with membership.

Overall, 84% of respondents named at least one negative consequence of EU membership. Only 6% of respondents said there would be no negative consequences at all.

Respondents most often ranked the following among the top negative consequences: intrusive political correctness and the imposition of values and rules imposed on Ukrainians (35%), bureaucracy and lengthy decision-making (34%), and limits on Ukraine's sovereignty and EU interference in its internal affairs (30%). These are followed by immigration to Ukraine of people from culturally different countries (25%) and Ukrainians leaving the country (20%).

Chart II.2.1 Which of these possible negative consequences do you associate with EU membership? Choose up to 3 answers.



Other negative consequences were ranked among the top 3 by fewer respondents, though still by quite a few: 12% cited a weaker economy, and 9% cited reduced safety and rising crime.

The table below presents the results broken down by how respondents would vote in a referendum on EU accession.

Among those who would support EU accession in a referendum, 83% named at least one negative consequence. Most often (in first place) they mentioned bureaucracy and the imposition of imposed values and rules, followed (in second place) by immigration to Ukraine, limits on sovereignty, and Ukrainians leaving the country.

Among those who would vote "against" in a referendum, 89% were able to name at least one negative consequence of EU membership. Roughly in first place among their expectations are limits on sovereignty and the imposition of values and rules imposed on Ukrainians, with immigration to Ukraine and bureaucracy roughly in second place.

Among those who would not vote in a referendum, 85% were able to name at least one negative consequence of EU membership. About three expectations were named equally often (and most often): the imposition of values and rules imposed on Ukrainians, bureaucracy, and limits on sovereignty.

Among those undecided about how they would vote in a referendum, 74% were able to name at least one negative consequence of EU membership. Roughly in first place among their expectations are the imposition of values and rules imposed on Ukrainians and limits on sovereignty, with bureaucracy and immigration to Ukraine roughly in second place.

Table II.2.1 Negative consequences most associated with EU membership, by how respondents would vote in a referendum on EU accession

% per column	For	Against	Would not vote	Undecided
Intrusive political correctness, imposing values and rules that are inconsistent with Ukrainian traditions and norms.	32	48	36	33
Bureaucracy, lengthy decision-making	35	29	35	21
Limits on Ukraine's sovereignty, EU interference in internal affairs	25	49	33	31
Immigration to Ukraine of people from culturally different countries	26	31	22	16
Ukrainians leaving the country	24	12	12	15
Weakening of Ukraine's economy	10	16	14	16
Less safety and security, rising crime	8	14	11	7
Other	0	2	0	0
EU membership will have no negative consequences	8	1	3	3
Hard to say	9	10	12	23

The table below presents the results broken down by sociodemographic category. In every category, at least 75% were able to name at least one negative consequence of EU membership, and in almost all cases the same consequences were named most often.

The emphasis may differ somewhat across categories. For example, limits on sovereignty were mentioned more often by residents of the South and East (compared with residents of the West and Center). Overall, however, the picture is still quite similar across all categories.

II.3 Trust in the EU as a guardian of Human Rights in Ukraine

Most Ukrainians—68%—would trust the EU as a guardian of human rights in Ukraine if Ukraine became a member. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that opinions on this issue are cautious: of the 68% who would trust the EU, 14% would trust it "completely," while 54% would "somewhat" trust it.

Meanwhile, 28% of respondents said they would not trust it.

While 86% of those who would vote "for" in a referendum would trust the EU as a guardian of respect for human rights in Ukraine (and 12% would not), among those who would vote "against," only 24% would trust it (and 71% would not).

In the two other categories—those who would not vote and those who are undecided—opinions are evenly split: about half would trust the EU, and about half would not.

SECTION III. ATTITUDES TOWARD DIFFICULT REFORMS FOR EU ACCESSION

The survey sought to establish Ukrainians' attitudes toward carrying out difficult reforms on the path to EU membership. One of the challenges is that respondents could interpret what exactly " difficult reforms " means differently—for example, which area is being discussed.

Therefore, this survey included a split-sample experiment. Respondents were randomly divided into three groups, and each group was told about different "difficulties." All respondents were first read the same text: "For the sake of joining the EU, Ukraine must carry out a number of difficult reforms, some of which are necessary, but…" The text then differed:

- Version A: "may be unpopular and not supported by the majority of the population."
- Version B: "may not correspond to Ukrainians' cultural traditions."
- Version C: "may conflict with how national security is currently ensured."

Respondents then had to choose whether the reforms should still be carried out or whether "such reforms should be abandoned, even if this derails EU accession." The results are shown in the chart below.

In all three cases, the majority believe that the reforms should be carried out despite these difficulties or problems. At the same time, the reaction does differ depending on which difficulties or problems are involved. Respondents show the highest support for reforms when it comes to unpopular measures not supported by the majority of the population: in this case, 74% favor carrying out the reforms and only 18% believe they should then be abandoned.

National security comes next. Even if the reforms conflict with how national security is ensured (in general terms, without specifics), 66% still support carrying out the relevant reforms, while 25% are opposed.

Support for continuing reforms is the lowest of the three when the reforms do not align with Ukrainians' cultural traditions. In this case, 57% support carrying out the reforms, while 33% oppose them.

SECTION IV. PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA AND PRIVACY

IV.1 Importance of Protecting Personal Data and Privacy

For 9 out of 10 respondents (89%), it is important that their personal data and privacy be protected. Of these, 64% said it is "very" important (for the remaining 25%, it is "somewhat" important).

Only 9% said it is not important to them.

IV.2 Trust in Ukrainian Government Institutions to Protect Personal Data

Opinions on whether Ukrainian government institutions can be trusted to protect personal data are divided, but more respondents trust them than not. Thus, **55% trust Ukrainian government institutions to protect personal data properly**, although only 12% of them trust them "completely" (the remaining 44% "somewhat" trust them).

At the same time, **42% of respondents said they do not trust them**.

The following features are worth noting. **There are three categories in which those who do not trust outnumber or nearly equal those who do. First and foremost, these are Russian-speaking citizens (55% do not trust, while 41% trust). They are followed by the unemployed (51% and 49%, respectively) and by entrepreneurs, the self-employed, and farmers (50% and 49%, respectively)**.

In addition, **by age, respondents aged 30–59 assess the situation noticeably more critically**.

SECTION V. UKRAINIANS IN THE TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

V.1 Perceptions of Ukrainians in the Temporarily Occupied Territories

To study perceptions of Ukrainians who find themselves in the temporarily occupied territories, we used a question that Civil Network OPORA asked in its 2023 study.[33] Besides capturing current attitudes, this allows us to analyze whether there has been any change over the past few years.

Respondents were asked, "Who are most of the citizens of Ukraine who…," and we then randomly divided respondents into three groups, which were read the following endings:

- Version A: "currently remain in the territories occupied by Russia after February 24, 2022 (Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Luhansk, and Kherson oblasts)."
- Version B: "have remained in the temporarily occupied districts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts since 2014."
- Version C: "have remained in temporarily occupied Crimea since 2014."

In other words, respondents answered the question about only one category of Ukrainians who find themselves in the temporarily occupied territories. The answer options were "Hostages of difficult life circumstances (personal, family)," "Hostages of the occupying forces," "Opportunists who don't care who governs them," "Passive supporters of the ideology of the 'Russian world' and the USSR," and "Traitors who supported Russia's armed aggression." Respondents had to choose only one answer.

Compared with Civil Network OPORA's 2023 survey, two methodological differences should be kept in mind when interpreting the results. First, in the 2023 survey, respondents answered about all three categories of Ukrainians in the temporarily occupied territories. We asked about only one category to avoid a possible question-order effect (i.e., the answer about one category influencing the answers about subsequent categories). Although such an effect may occur, its magnitude would certainly not be large enough to significantly affect the results. Second, the 2023 survey was conducted through face-to-face interviews, while ours used telephone interviews. However, KIIS experiments (in particular, a survey in summer 2026) have shown that on many sociopolitical issues the differences between the two methods are relatively small.[34] Therefore, we believe that, overall, we can compare the results with 2023 and analyze the trends.

The results are presented in the table below. **First, for all categories of Ukrainians in the occupied territories, the majority (at least 61%) have a broadly positive perception and describe them as hostages of life circumstances or hostages of the occupying forces.**

[33] Ukrainians' attitudes toward those who remained in the TOT—OPORA survey results (in Ukrainian) // https://oporaua.org/viyna/stavlennya-ukrayinciv-do-tih-hto-zalishivsya-na-TOT-24870

[34] Sociopolitical attitudes of Ukraine's population: Results of a survey conducted July 16–31, 2026 (in Ukrainian) // https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1627&page=1

Second, however, perceptions differ: respondents view those living in the territory occupied since 2022 more favorably. For this group, 74% have a broadly positive perception, compared with 62% among those living in areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions occupied in 2014–2015 and 61% among those in Crimea. Conversely, while 16% have a broadly negative perception of residents of the territories occupied since 2022, the figures for the other two categories are 25% and 26%, respectively.

Third, compared with 2023, attitudes toward Ukrainians living in the territories occupied since 2022 have not changed. At the same time, perceptions have improved for both those living in the areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions occupied in 2014–2015 (the share choosing broadly positive answers rose from 51% to 62%, while the share giving broadly negative answers fell from 37% to 25%) **and those living in Crimea** (the share choosing broadly positive answers rose from 48% to 61%, while the share giving broadly negative answers fell from 38% to 26%).

Although the observed change may partly reflect the methodological factors discussed above, given the size of the changes (and the fact that there was no change for residents of the territories occupied since 2022, so we are not seeing a shift in the same direction in all cases), perceptions have most likely genuinely improved since 2023.

Table V.1.1 Who are most of the citizens of Ukraine who…? Choose one answer.

100% per column	Territories occupied after February 24, 2022		Areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts occupied in 2014–2015		Crimea	
	2023	2026	2023	2026	2023	2026
Total broadly positive answers (hostages)	**77**	**74**	**51**	**62**	**48**	**61**
Total broadly negative answers (opportunists or supporters/traitors)	**14**	**16**	**37**	**25**	**38**	**26**
Breakdown of answers:						
Hostages of difficult life circumstances (personal, family)	45	44	36	40	31	35
Hostages of the occupying forces	32	30	15	22	17	26
Opportunists who don't care who governs them	7	10	16	13	18	13
Passive supporters of the ideology of the "Russian world" and the USSR	4	3	14	5	12	5
Traitors who supported Russia's armed aggression	3	3	7	7	8	7
Hard to say	10	10	12	13	14	13

Some variation is evident, but overall attitudes are similar across categories.

Note that, by region of residence, there is a trend from West to East toward somewhat more broadly positive answers about residents of the territories occupied since 2022 (from 72% in the West and 71% in the Center to 84% in the East) and about residents of Crimea (from 55% in the West to 70% in the East). For the areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions occupied in 2014–2015, by contrast, views are almost the same across regions. IDP respondents do not show more favorable attitudes than non-IDP respondents (their answers are quite similar).

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