



Friedrich Naumann
STIFTUNG FÜR DIE FREIHEIT

MIDDLE CLASS IN UKRAINE: IDENTIFICATION CRITERIA

EXPERT ASSESSMENTS,
CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS AND SELF-IDENTIFICATION



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

The project was conducted by the Razumkov Centre. The pilot study and focus group discussions were sponsored by the Government of Canada through the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD). The publication was supported by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom in Ukraine.

Kyiv-2014

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This publication reports the results of the first phase of the project “*Middle Class in Ukraine: Life Values, Readiness for Association, and Promotion of Democratic Standards*”, implemented by the Razumkov Centre and sponsored by the Government of Canada through the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD).

This publication contains the expert discussion (19 June 2014, Kyiv) that offers different perspectives on the criteria and methods for determining the “middle class” in Ukraine; some materials from six focus group discussions held in Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, Kharkiv; and results of the pilot study (19-24 July 2014).

This new publication of the Razumkov Centre Library will be useful to sociologists, political scientists, experts and journalists, and to all interested in formation of the middle class as a social foundation of civil society in Ukraine.

When using the materials, please refer to the publication.

Any views expressed in speeches and articles are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Razumkov Centre.

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ISBN 978-966-2050-04-2

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Director for Ukraine
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With the significant social and political changes in the aftermath of November 2013, the “middle class” seems like the favourite topic for politicians and commentators in Ukraine. However, its role in the development of political and economic processes of the country is not being debated for the first time.

Before we can assess the importance of a social group, we first have to know what people it is made of. This is why Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom supported this detailed analysis of the Ukrainian middle class undertaken by the Razumkov Centre.

We consider this research paper of great interest and importance, because it will provide a basis for discussing the political role of the middle class in Ukraine. A significant middle class is widely viewed as the pillar for democratic standards, as an independent group of citizens protects liberal democracy by demanding participation, minimizing factional fighting, and promoting policies for the benefit of all, rather than for special interests. After the *EuroMaidan*, which has been widely supported by small and medium businesses, newly established parties declare funding coming from small and medium-sized enterprises as a viable alternative to the established parties’ alleged dependency on oligarchs.

The discussion which links social stratification with different forms of governance can be traced back to Ancient Greece and to Aristotle’s “Politics”, where the middle class, free from the ambition of the rich and the pettiness of the poor, is presented as a natural link warranting political cohesion. However, a strong middle class not automatically fosters better governance, nor is it a fool-proof insurance against corruption and nepotism. Where particular groups in government, or the administration, have unrestricted access to resources, or rely on the redistributive capacity of the state, a group of people belonging to the middle class may not be independent, and thus not favour a liberal democracy.

This line of thought is already found in Friedrich Hayek’s “Constitution of Liberty” (Chicago, 1960), who writes that democracy is a good mechanism only if it does not provide an opportunity for certain groups to hijack the system and use it to further their own goals through coercive power: “The conception that government should be guided by majority opinion makes sense only if that opinion is independent of government. The ideal of democracy rests on the belief that the view which will direct government emerges from an independent and spontaneous process. It requires, therefore, the existence of a large group independent of majority control in which opinions of the individuals are formed”.

To sum things up: The middle class is in many countries, and can be in Ukraine, the guardian of liberal democracy – if it is not captured by interest groups, no matter which societal class they are from. A strong middle class, independent of the government and administration, is a very good base for the core of a strong coalition of independent and well-educated citizens to provide checks and balances of power. This is why the topic is indeed of utmost importance for Ukraine right now.

This is not the first time that the Razumkov Centre addresses problems related with the middle class formation in Ukraine. In particular, in 2002, the Centre's Sociological Service acting under the Freedom House programme Partnership for Reform in Ukraine with assistance from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) performed a special study "*The Level and Factors of Public Activity in Ukraine*". Study of civic engagement of the Ukrainian middle class (first of all, by self-identification, the so-called "subjective middle class") was a separate project within the framework of that study.¹ In 2008, the Centre conducted yet another national survey to define the quantity and quality characteristics of the middle class as well as to perform a comparative analysis with the data obtained in 2002. A special issue of the Centre's *National Security & Defence* journal was devoted to the results of this study.²



Anatoliy RACHOK,
Director General,
the Razumkov Centre

Currently, the Razumkov Centre's experts are working on the project "*Middle Class in Ukraine: Life Values, Readiness for Association, and Promotion of Democratic Standards*". The experts proceed from the fact that (the formation of) the middle class in transitional society (as in Ukraine) is particularly important primarily due to its demand for democratic values and standards, since it is the middle class that appears as the main bearer and defender of these rights and standards. Secondly, middle class lays the social foundation of the civil society, and without it, building a democratic, legal, and social state becomes impossible.

For now, within the project, the expert discussion "*The Problems of Identification Criteria of the Middle Class in Ukraine*" took place, the focus group discussions in several Ukrainian cities – Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, and Kharkiv – were held, and a pilot study was conducted. The aim of these activities was: to clarify approaches to the definition of the middle class in Ukraine; to identify current perceptions the Ukrainian citizens share about it; to establish the criteria on the basis of which the Ukrainians attribute themselves to the middle class as well as the characteristics they consider to be inherent to its representatives.

The expert discussion generally proved the importance of conducting research on the middle class formation in Ukraine, the existence of multiple approaches to its definition as well as several identification criteria used for classification of certain groups within this social stratum. In particular, the discussions focused on the specifics of the Ukrainian middle class and on the research methods to study it. For instance, the "education – work – income – status" relationship inherent to the Western society does not apply here in full, since, in Ukraine, there is rather weak

¹ Yakymenko, Yu. Social activity in Ukraine: are we doomed to what we have? – *National Security & Defence*, 2002, No.10, p.31-36 http://www.razumkov.org.ua/ukr/files/category_journal/NSD34_ukr.pdf; Shanghina, L. Ukraine's middle class as a public actor. – Ibid., p.37-44.

² The middle class as a prerequisite for Ukraine's democratic future. – *National Security & Defence*, 2008, No.7; <http://www.razumkov.org.ua>.

correlation between the level of education and income. The existence of a large “shadow” economy and, therefore, a questionable reliability of the official data on income and employment add a new difficulty to the study.

The participants generally agreed to the idea that the maturity level and the scope of the middle class depend on the criteria used for its definition, which in turn, is dependent on the goal of the survey. Say, if researchers study the middle class as an economic entity, the main criteria for its definition will comprise the level of income, the existence and nature of tangible assets, consumer behaviour, etc. But if to take a political science approach, the self-identification criteria may come to the fore, since in socio-political terms, people often make judgements based on their personal perceptions and preferences.

Focus group discussions revealed that the criteria the participants use to identify themselves with the middle class, appear quite traditional: a particular level of income which enables not only to have an acceptable living standards for the family but also to make savings; certain assets ownership, topped by a housing, a car and a country house (*dacha*); higher education; non-manual work; full-time employment or own business.

Noteworthy, the focus group participants rejected the idea that people with “average income” belong to the middle class. Presumably, such an approach is associated with “average wages” which are still inadequate in Ukraine to ensure a standard of living matching their ideas of the “middle class”, and the main thing – these wages are clearly not enough to make savings or to buy housing.

Critical attitude of the focus group participants to the existing wage gap, especially for teaching and doctor jobs as well as to their low social status and public interest in these professions, also strikes the eye. According to the discussants, these professional groups should unconditionally belong to the middle class, but their official income does not allow this and prompts them to seek additional or unofficial work, which affects their skills, social and professional status.

In general, focus groups produced some interesting judgments of the Ukrainian middle class, which in many respects are consistent with relevant theoretical concepts and suggest that the notion of the middle class exists not only in academic and political discourses but also in public mind as a whole.

This publication contains the expert discussions, the summary of some focus group results and the pilot study. The materials of the expert discussion will be used for preparation of the “*Analytical Report on the Project Implementation*”. A full version of the focus group discussions will be published in a special issue of the *National Security & Defence* journal, dedicated to the final results of the project.

PROBLEMS OF IDENTIFICATION CRITERIA OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

On 19 June 2014, in the framework of the project, the Razumkov Centre held an expert discussion dedicated to the problem of establishing the identification criteria for the middle class in Ukraine. The following questions were proposed for discussion:

1. Middle class – a real or “imaginary” community?
2. The concept of social functions and characteristics of the middle class as a social community, and their influence on shaping the identification criteria.
3. Objective and subjective identification criteria.
4. The experience of applying the identification criteria.

At the beginning of the discussion, Deputy Director of Sociological Service Mykhailo Mishchenko briefly outlined the Razumkov Centre’s research on the middle class in Ukraine. In particular, it was noted that the experts often used the following criteria to describe the Ukrainian middle class – stable self-identification of the respondents;¹ certain level of education (above secondary); and a relatively high level of welfare – not less than three points on a one-to-five self-assessment scale.² These and other criteria became the subject of expert discussion.

Presented below are the speeches delivered by the participants in the order of their appearance. The speeches represent summaries of transcriptions.

WHEN DEFINING THE CONCEPT OF THE MIDDLE CLASS, WE SHOULD TRACE THE HISTORY OF ITS ORIGIN

I have never written about the problems of the middle class, and it gives me some advantages – of an observer, so to speak. However, I have been an observer of this problem for some time, since the mid-1990s.

Now, what bothers me is that **we are discussing the criteria without any clarification of the nature of the concept. After all, any criteria will become arbitrary and meaningless unless we focus on their nature, on a clear understanding of the category** that we are discussing. Even more importantly, this remark touches on the problem of self-identification, since we can never be sure that respondents understand this concept in the same way researchers do.



Volodymyr SIDENKO,
Economic Research Consultant,
the Razumkov Centre

¹ A respondent identifies himself as middle class both in the parameters “upper – middle – lower class” and the parameters “upper class – middle class – working class – lower class” as well as in the test of integrated self-assessment of the social status – within four to six (in the above test, a respondent is given a 10-point “social ladder”, where ten means the lowest status in the society, and one means the highest).

² The respondents are asked to assess the financial situation of their family on the following scale – (1) “we hardly make ends meet, there is not enough money even for essential goods”; (2) “we have enough for food and purchasing inexpensive essential goods”; (3) “in general, it is enough for a living but purchasing durables causes difficulties”; (4) “we are well off but we cannot afford some purchases yet (for example, buy a flat, a car etc)”; (5) “we can afford to buy almost anything we want”.

So, if you conduct a public opinion poll and ask whether the respondents categorise themselves as “intelligent” or “fools” – I think you will get 100% of those who identify themselves with the first category. Or when deciding between “honest” and “scammers”, actually all scammers will definitely categorise themselves as “honest”. At least, when responding to a public opinion poll. So here lies the problem.

I think in order to come close to a more proper understanding, we should trace the history of origin of this concept. It appeared in the late Middle Ages; it was called feudalism in the Marxist social doctrine, and is associated with rather specific things. So this is not an artificially created category – it is really a class, and it was recorded empirically.

What was it about? It was about the formation of a certain group of people who were fundamentally different from both the class of feudal owners and dependent peasantry. The class (especially in cities), economically connected with the emergence of medieval manufactories, and even more – with trade capital formation, was emerging. Therefore, “bourgeoisie” appears to be one of the definitions of middle class in major academic publications. In other words, this new class emerged in times of feudal formation and eventually changed the feudal system.

Thus, today the situation has changed – the initial understanding went down in history together with the Middle Ages but the term remained. The term that is detached from the historical context in which it had emerged. The search for its scope has started. People do not usually enjoy giving up concepts and intellectual symbols which they once introduced. They start searching – what is “middle class”?

We can see that from this perspective, the middle class becomes a specific category of social stratification, and certain analytical elements emerge in it – i.e. something that is connected, in my opinion, with the statistical approach. It is based on certain statistical patterns of the so-called normal distribution, which is mathematically described with Gaussian curve: when the majority in a society belong to a *middle class*³ which in turn ensures stability of a society. Thus, stable social communities are the communities which are to a certain extent statistically described by such a distribution.

This leads to a variety of specific approaches to the definition of belonging to the middle class – whether one has a certain level of income, a house, a car, etc. Or subjectively – where a person sees himself in this statistical distribution.

However, a question arises – is this really the only correct approach to the analysis? Why has the issue of middle class emerged? It has emerged because we still see the processes which were characteristic of the West in the era of late feudalism – the formation of entrepreneurial class. When for Western countries, this traditional politico-economic aspect emerged in the past and vanished over the years, for us – it is still relevant today.

³ Gaussian curve, or normal distribution curve, here is a graphic expression of the results of massive research when any attribute of most research objects is inherent to a certain “normal” – not extreme – extent. This graphic expression is bell-shaped, where attribute parameters at first increase rapidly, and after reaching the maximum value, fall symmetrically. – Ed.

Therefore, I think there is dualism in our research. On the one hand, we use the traditional Western approach to social identification (by asking, which group do you belong to judging by your income, achievements, social wellbeing?), and on the other hand, we take into account the aspect of the entrepreneurial class formation in the country. So we rely on that basic aspect that existed at the time of the emergence of the term “middle class”.

Therefore, I think it would be wrong to narrow down the discussion to ranking criteria either by income or social wellbeing. There should be a defining moment – what are the sources of this income? What is the social situation regarding the structure of income generation and distribution? With no clarification of this aspect, it would be a fundamental mistake to define the concept of middle class for those countries that are still at the stage of market formation.

Therefore, I think we need a more comprehensive approach that will include this politico-economic analysis. Why? **What is middle class in political terms? This is actually the basis of a democratic political organisation.** If the upper class in its status gravitates towards authoritarianism and oligarchic rule, and the lower class – towards what one may call ochlocracy, it is the middle class (which representatives are self-sufficient people earning sufficient income to ensure independent existence and development of their abilities) that is representative of the political system associated with democracy. This has been observed not only in the most developed countries (which is obvious) but also in developing countries, where the system of market democracy is only emerging.

I think it is very important to use a comprehensive approach and go beyond methods of social stratification and sociopsychological self-identification. One should pay attention to the criteria such as the place of the community in a system of socio-economic reconstruction and in the political organisation of the society. Under the current circumstances, without considering these criteria, the concept of the middle class will not be adequately defined.

SUBJECTIVE OR SUBJECTIVE-OBJECTIVE INDICATORS ARE MORE APPROPRIATE FOR MEASURING THE MIDDLE CLASS

First of all, I would like to say that the “middle class”, in my opinion, is not a sociological term. It is more of a political and journalistic term. Although it proved useful, and social scientists have been using it too. The social class, on the other hand, represents a classic sociological concept and is defined as a place of an individual in the system of production (ownership of the means of production and control over the work of others), and from this point of view, middle class is not a social class at all.

The other remark concerns subjective and objective criteria. There exists a misconception that objective information (statistics, in particular) is more reliable than subjective one, and that is why an objective criterion is better than subjective one. Is it really so? I think not. *First of all*, the division between the objective



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and subjective is not a dichotomy. Actually, the criterion that we both use is not exclusively subjective. We cannot always claim that the state and department statistics represent purely objective data. The statistics are often based on sample method of data collection. For example, data on income and expenditure are based on sample surveys of facts – how much bread and various other products an average household buys per week. Thus, in addition to objective and subjective data, we can distinguish the *subjective facts*, which one may call subjective-objective.

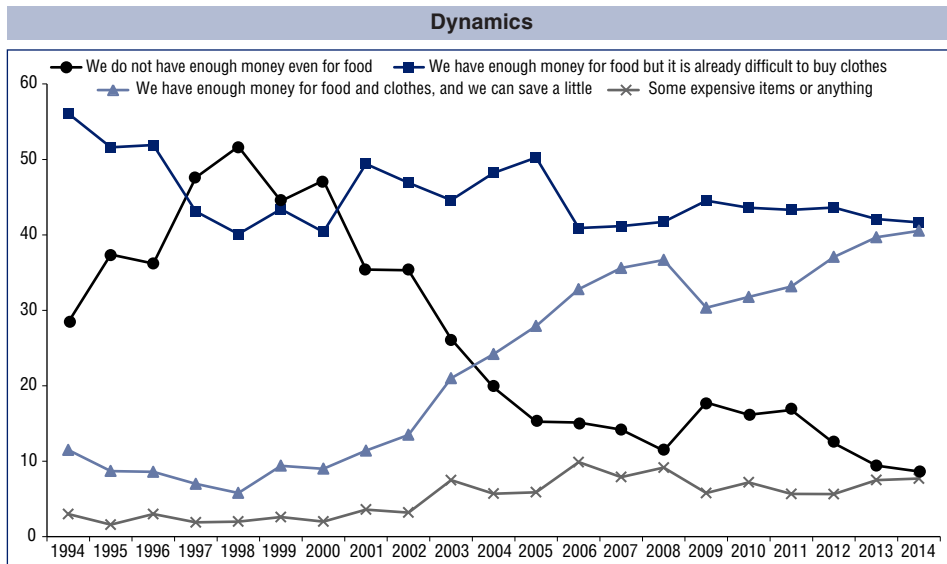
Survey data are often more reliable than state statistics. For example, the rape rate, according to sociological research seems to be four times higher than the rape rate officially recorded by police (since most rape victims do not approach them). Such sociological data are not completely subjective indicators but rather subjective-objective.

However, there are purely subjective indicators – for example, the level of life satisfaction. It is harder to work with subjective indicators but it does not mean that they are less reliable. Let us take life satisfaction. Life satisfaction, for example, in Nigeria is very high, and it creates an impression of unreliability of this indicator. However, this is because life satisfaction is a ratio of an actual wellbeing to the level of demands. Life satisfaction can be high due to a low level of demands. Indeed, according to our research in 1985-1989 in Kyiv, in 1985, the level of satisfaction was +36, and in 1989 it became -1. Although nothing had changed in the economy, there was no break of relations, collapse of the USSR, etc. However, due to *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, it became clear what standard of living the Western world and developed countries had – therefore, the level of demands soared while satisfaction dropped because, as I mentioned above, it represents a ratio of wellbeing to the level of demands.

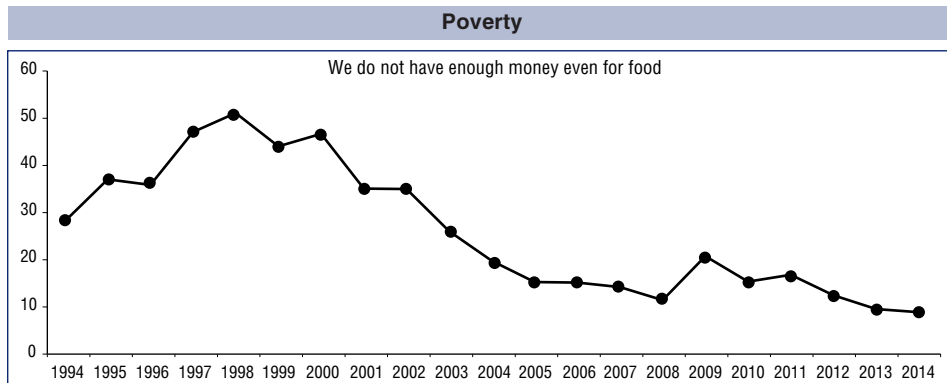
Self-assessment of the financial situation in a family, which the Sociological Service of the Razumkov Centre uses as an indicator, is similar to the indicator of life satisfaction; it is a rather subjective indicator but it can work. We use roughly the same scale but slightly different wording – as listed in the table “Indicator”.

Thus, we have five groups, where the fifth, theoretically, should be the “upper class”, but practically is the middle one, because the upper class does not fall into the sample, and we do not know much about it. Therefore, we merge the forth (“we can buy some expensive items...”) and the fifth (“we can afford everything...”) group into one (“we can afford to buy some expensive items”), and then work with four groups. Changes within these groups since 1994 are demonstrated in the Chart “Dynamics”.

Which of the following statements best describes the financial situation of your household? indicator	
We have enough money for food	1
We have enough money for food but it is already difficult to buy clothes or shoes	2
We have enough money for food and clothes, and we can save a little but it is not enough for buying such things as a fridge or a TV	3
We can buy some expensive items (for example, a TV or a fridge) but we cannot afford everything we want	4
We can afford everything we want	5



The chart answers the question for what there is not enough money. The first group (“we do not have enough money even for food”) are certainly the poor. When we study the poverty rate (the Chart “*Poverty*”) this indicator can be interpreted well. Indeed, the level of poverty had been increasing until 1990, then economic growth started, and it had been falling until the crisis in 2008. By the way, I think that this is one of the achievements of Ukrainian state noticed by a very few people. Because such a rapid decline in poverty (by 40%) in 10 years is a big victory of Ukraine, and for some reason, very few people have written about it. In 2008, after the crisis, the poverty rate increased, and has not fallen since then.



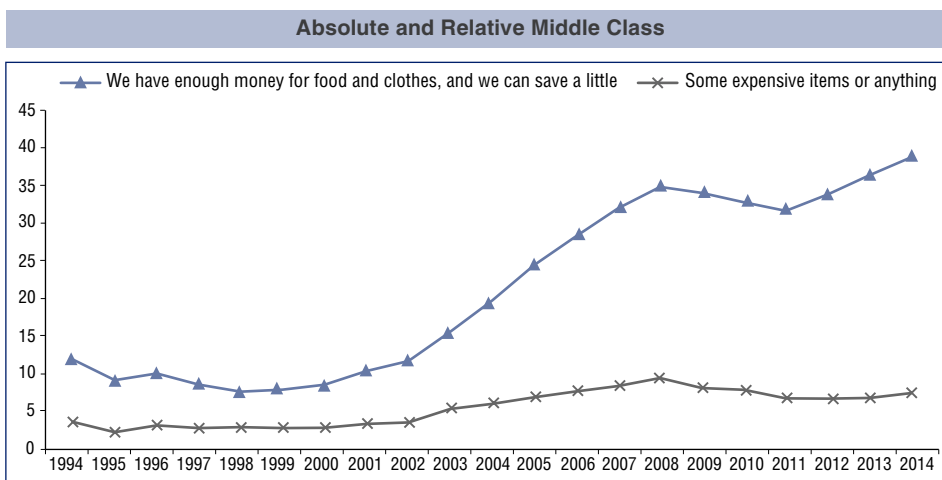
The comparison of poverty rate based on the results of this criterion to the poverty rate calculated using the method of the World Bank, shows that the correlation coefficient between them is 0.94. I think, this can also be used to distinguish middle class.

We once worked on President Leonid Kuchma's address to the Verkhovna Rada on the middle class.⁴ There was a lot of arguing there. According to European standards, we had 1.2% of the middle class. Therefore, if I am not mistaken, Ella Libanova suggested to focus not on European standards but on average indicators for *Ukraine* and talk about Ukrainian middle class. These are the people who are in much better situation than other strata of Ukrainian society.

Maybe, it will make sense to do the same with the poverty rate when absolute and relative poverty are distinguished. Absolute poverty is when physicians calculate how many calories a person needs to live on, and then, a food basket is chosen for this amount of calories, and its cost is determined. Relative poverty is people getting income that is significantly lower than the average income in Ukraine.

It may be possible to distinguish the "absolute middle class" – the same as the European (it can be groups 4 and 5, now combined in one – the forth), and the "relative middle class" – the third group, a more well-off compared to those who do not have enough money even for food (the poor, the first group), and only for food (the second group).

From this point of view, as we can see in the Chart "*Absolute and Relative Middle Class*", our absolute middle class was growing until 2008 up to 10%, and after the crisis, it dropped, and still has not recovered, so now, it is much smaller than it was in 2008. The relative – Ukrainian – middle class has also dropped after 2008 but it has already started growing, and now it is larger than in 2008. I propose to define middle class by using this subjective-objective indicator.



⁴ The Policy of Development of the Middle Class in the Presidential Address to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine On Domestic and Foreign Situation in Ukraine in 2001. – Kyiv, 2002, p.104-121. – *Ed.*

Middle class is considered a group that is interested in stability in the country. What are the attitudes of the middle class in Ukraine? As we can see from the Table “*Some Characteristics*”, an absolute (European) middle class and relative (Ukrainian) middle class differ by some indicators. Indeed, as for the absolute middle class, there is a significantly higher share of people with higher education.

These and other classes differ even more. For example, 26% of the poor, 55% of a relative (Ukrainian) middle class, and 61% of an absolute (European) middle class would vote in favour of Ukraine joining the EU. The share of Internet users among a relative middle class is 65%, among the absolute – 85%, among the poor – only 27%, and among those who have enough money only for food – 35%. In the first two groups, 50% and 56% stay at home in summer; and in the third and fourth group the share is 37% and 18%, respectively. Very few of them are planning to travel abroad – 10% only, even among representatives of an absolute middle class.

Some Characteristics						
	Men	University degree	Would vote in favour of joining the EU	Use the Internet	Stay at home in summer	Go abroad
We do not have enough money even for food	37.6	12.9	26.0	27.2	53.2	2.3
We have enough money for food but it is already difficult to buy clothes or	40.7	18.8	40.3	36.9	56.3	0.6
We have enough money for food and clothes, and we can save a little	47.5	33.1	54.8	65.5	37.0	4.3
We can afford to buy some expensive items	61.8	55.9	61.4	85.4	18.8	9.7

So, there are still some differences in attitudes. May the middle class be a stabilising factor in Ukraine? It is hard to say for sure, but it may.

Everything we study can be criticised the same way the attempts to identify middle class are being criticised. However, I think, the subjective or subjective-objective indicators are more appropriate for measuring the middle class than objective ones. However, it is not only about self-identification, since it depends heavily on the work of the mass media. The population can categorise themselves if these questions become the subject of civil discourse, and if everyone understands what this is about. Therefore, this criterion should merge with others.

MIDDLE CLASS IS A RATHER METAPHORICAL CONCEPT

I consider the issue of the middle class – the periphery of sociology. Furthermore, such a distant one that I have recently refrained from discussing this problem, although in 1990s, I published several papers dedicated to it. However, back then, it was about the formation of the class of owners, and that middle class was, above all, bourgeoisie. So it made sense to talk about it back then.

However, we should think whether it is appropriate now, since among those interested in studying the middle class, social scientists are lagging far behind. Clearly, ahead are the politicians who (if they are sensitive to public opinion) know that they should take interest in how people feel – good or bad.



Serhiy MAKEIEV,
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of the NAS of Ukraine

It is assumed that middle class feels more or less good. Both experts and consultants working for national and government agencies also say and whisper that this is very important. It is no coincidence that in all the presidential addresses to the Verkhovna Rada and addresses to the nation, there is a topic of the middle class. This is clearly the influence of experts. **For some reason they identify the middle class as something good, and assign virtues to it, which, I do not find characteristic of it.**

Who else takes interest in middle class, more or less, or to the same extent? Clearly, it is the business. It needs to sell goods and services, it needs solvent buyers, and, naturally, it takes interest in it. Naturally, marketing managers are there. By the way, I am pretty sure that every decent marketing service has a well-developed methodology of empirical fixation of the middle class, because they need to give advice who to sell to, what to sell, what amount to sell, and whether it will sell. However, this is a trade secret, no one intervenes there, and we know nothing about it.

Who else? Clearly, the political economy experts. Indeed, we need to sort this out because, in 1990, new people emerged who have taken a certain place in the system of social production. Shall we call them bourgeoisie – the old, the new one? Whatever, this is a matter of terminology...

Who else? Journalists, especially those who graduated in the past two decades. They heard of the global historic mission of the middle class allegedly from experts, and in lectures. They are curious – when will we have such a creative class? In this range of those interested, social scientists are somewhere behind. Why? For one simple reason – because I, as a social scientist, cannot imagine what I can explain with the concept of the middle class. I only use class schemes to explain something. However, here I am confused and cannot think of anything I could explain using this concept.

Nevertheless, regardless of our discussion, we have different approaches. I will not talk about subjective and objective criteria since I cannot tell them apart, I do not have this discrimination ability. I know for sure that there are simple ways to identify middle class, there are more complex ones, and there are fairly complex ways to identify classes in general. I think speaking about middle classes is a metaphor, so I will speak metaphorically.

What are the simple ways? They can be identified, for example, by wage or income, as it is done in the United States. Everything is very simple. There is poverty line, and there is median wage. Everything that varies within the median wage in the 50% range can be classified as middle class. As of the beginning of 2014, this wage range in the U.S. amounts to \$76 000 and \$25 000 annually. Here you have middle class, the rest is evil. By the way, around 10 years ago,

Mykola Azarov published an article on the middle class. He also classified it by an average wage, and discovered that 60% of citizens were the middle class in Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk Oblasts.⁵

Or you can ask, “*What class do you identify yourself with?*”. Again, as of the beginning of this year, in the United States, 40% of the population described themselves as middle class (in 2008, it was 53% but then the crisis came). We also have 40%. Of course, we probably have a different middle class but, nevertheless, people define themselves like that. There is another very simple metaphorical way to identify middle class – by income. By the way, I have read somewhere a while ago, and keep repeating this political joke from time to time, “Who is the middle class? They are those who are not that rich to buy votes, and not that poor to sell their own”. Here you have a so-called “middlish” class.

Simple ways are not always that simple. Indeed, in Ukraine (and not only in Ukraine – everywhere), when asked directly about the amount of earnings, wage, or income, respondents do not answer. According to a European study, almost 60% of people refuse to answer a direct question. That is why we should look for other options. For example, some ranges could be set. It is easier for people to fit into a range. Then you can work with a wage range...

Only in the UK they really think about classes. The concept of middle class – “middle classes” to be exact – has been used there since 19th century. Only in the UK, I think, they still take middle classes rather seriously – in science, in politics, and in journalism. Among the population, as I can say from the sources, self-identification is based on the four “not”. The middle class – we are not aristocracy, we are not authority, we are not working class, we are not business. This is who we are – we do not go to pubs as the working class does, we are not materialistic as businessmen, we do not have “blue” blood, and we do not rule or order anyone around. Maybe, this is probably why the “middle class” has been described (I have no idea where it has started – totally harmful assumptions!) as liberal, sustained, providing stability and so on. However, let us take, for example, the memoirs of John Fowles – how he described the middle class he came from.⁶ He knows that they are all commoners who do their own thing, do not respond to anything, and are not sensitive to anything, even to the suffering of neighbours, etc.

There are more complex schemes of class fixation (and they are improving). The most known is by John Goldthorpe, related to careful recording of the employment situation, or the situation in the labour market (which can be interpreted in different ways).⁷ These are proven schemes, and they are now used in many European research projects. Everything is tried-and-true – computer programmes have already been created for class identification. Classes, by the way, do not appear as middle

⁵ He probably refers to the article *Econometrics of Natural Persons in Ukraine*. See Azarov, N., Liekar, S., Loshchinin, M., Chushkal, D. *Econometrics of Natural Persons in Ukraine*. – *Economist*, 2001, No.1, p.37-53. – *Ed*.

⁶ J.R. Fowles (1926-2005) was a British writer. He was born into the family of a successful merchant, graduated from a prestigious school, and studied in Edinburgh and Oxford universities. – *Ed*.

⁷ Goldthorpe, J. was a British social scientist; among his research interests were social stratification and social mobility. – *Ed*.

there. Or they do purely metaphorically. Goldthorpe scheme – 11 classes – can be minimised to seven or three so the “middle” one will definitely appear.

However, **if we are using any indicators, the “middle” are those people who occupy the middle ground in the set of indicators.** This is a totally metaphorical presentation and representation of the middle class.

A year ago, an international team of researchers who were not satisfied with Goldthorpe’s and Wright’s Marxist schemes (Wright also used a Marxist scheme, he also has no “middle” ones) developed a more sophisticated scheme, related to Bourdieu’s ideas of capital.⁸ They defined three forms of capital – economic, social, and cultural; there are plenty of indicators, which are aggregated, comprise composite indices, and the programme of the latent class analysis, which, as a result, gives seven classes. Two of them are called “middle” – “old middle”, “new middle”. “Affluent” is also next to them. These are already complex things related to the application of various indicators, whose weight is unknown (and it may be impossible – somehow weighing and ranging them)...

Now you can work with this set of indicators in software packages that allow you to operate almost all our scales – pseudo-interval, ordinal, nominal, etc. – and build fairly complex structures. Therefore, at least in the project, the Razumkov Centre will probably have to combine both simple ways (and then somehow relate them) and more complex ones. Here you should think about increasing complexity because I think what we have been talking about is not enough. At least you should look at how the followers of Bourdieu did it.

We have also set ourselves this task – how to create stratified classifications based on research that is not specifically designed for this purpose? And yours are specifically designed – you can select indicators. By the way, my Ph.D. students have already done some work on what factors and indicators are more influential and have a greater influence on the formation of stratified classifications. So my suggestion is **to try to combine relatively simple and much more complex ways of assignment to middle class, if you have set such a task for yourself.** Despite my extremely sceptical attitude towards the appropriateness of “finding” middle class through sociological means, I believe that the new attempts in this direction are possible and desirable. The Thomas theorem comes to my mind, which in my free interpretation goes as follows, “Once something comes to people’s heads, they will not doubt its reality”. You cannot get away from journalists and politicians – step and fetch them “middle class”. No, I am definitely not going to participate. However, I always stand for experts coming up with something more sophisticated than it has been before.

⁸ Wright, E.O. is a contemporary American sociologist; his concept of classes is based on the principle of control over economic resources; two classes are distinguished – capitalists and working class, positions of all other groups are “vague” or “controversial”. Bourdieu, P. (1930-2002) was a famous French sociologist, philosopher, and culturologist; he regarded classes as “possible”, and not only depending on their standing in the system of economic relations but also in the system of social, cultural, and symbolic interactions (fields) – *Ed.*

NOT ONLY QUANTITATIVE BUT ALSO QUALITATIVE METHODS SHOULD BE APPLIED TO THE STUDY OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

I agree that it makes sense to talk about *Ukrainian* middle class in this study. In this regard, it is important to understand the aim of the study. The “essence of characteristics” has been discussed here – i.e. why and for what purpose these characteristics are defined. I have the same approach – from the pragmatic point of view of any study involving access to any conclusions and recommendations.

Therefore, the question is why and who needs it, and what is the aim? Why does it make sense to talk about Ukrainian middle class today, or try to talk about it? I will allow myself a bit of a tangent and take a trip down memory lane – 1990, the UK, my first sociological internship. After introductions, a British university professor added proudly, “*I am upper middle class*”. We have questioned him for a long time why “*upper middle*”, why was he so proud, and what did he mean by *upper middle class*? He tried to answer in various ways, considering our very imperfect English back then.

Here is the conclusion that we got – he was really proud of belonging to the *upper middle class*. He wants his children to inherit and be proud of it. He wants them to take over his lifestyle because *upper middle class* is a healthy lifestyle (they do not go to pubs not because the working class does so but because they serve unhealthy fish and chips). They think that they pass a certain value of education and knowledge on to their children. So it was a whole set of **characteristics of a specific lifestyle**, associated with pride in their country.

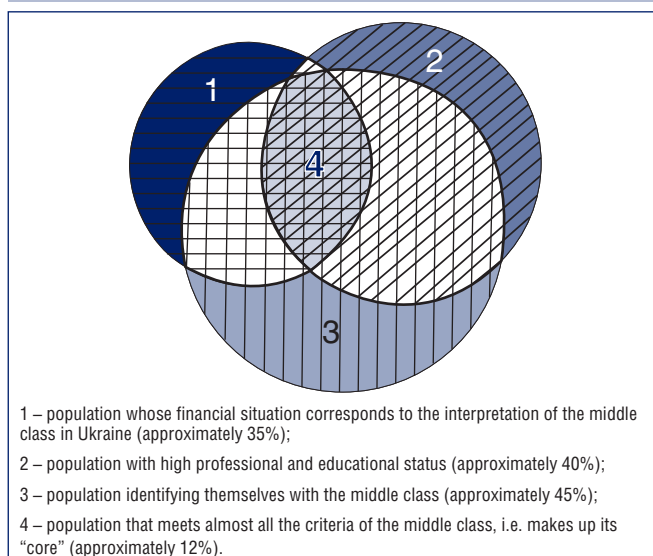
When reflecting why we should talk about Ukrainian middle class, I think it is important to move away from the criteria of only material wellbeing and financial situation. For in most studies, during the transition to a certain empirical level, all the theoretical concepts (that middle class should provide some stability, bring in the element of innovation, and that some lifestyle characteristics are inherent to it) remain somewhere at the level of theoretical reflections, and operationalisation leads to a list of categories of financial situation, income, property ownership, quality holidays, etc.



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The report “*The Policy of Development of the Middle Class*” in the presidential address to the Verkhovna Rada in Ukraine in 2002 has been already mentioned here. We also participated in its preparation. Identification of the middle class was carried out on the basis of analytical assessments simultaneously using the following criteria – average income, higher education, and high social status. A set defined using these criteria was suggested to be the core of the already formed middle class, and in 2002, it amounted to 12.3% of the country’s population.

Composition of the Middle Strata of Population in Ukraine



In preparation of this report (I do not have any recent data), our study included questions on self-identification of the respondents with middle class and the reasons for such self-identification. Those who did not identify themselves as middle class were asked, “*Why do not you describe yourself as middle class?*”.

Here, everything is very simple. Low income was mentioned first, “I do not own expensive

property” – second, and “I do not hold a managerial position” – third. The access to means and resources was quite an important criterion at that time. There were responses like “my relatives do not belong to the middle class”. By the way, the answer “I do not have higher education” was ranked sixth.

It is important to note that researchers did not propose these answers. It was an open question, and interviewers recorded the respondents’ exact words. Then these direct answers were grouped into the above categories. “I do not own property” was the answer of a fairly small percentage of respondents, and this can be explained by the fact that year 2002 saw the initial stage of formation of property institution. There were also answers put in a separate group that contained a variety of criteria on the basis of – as it has been already mentioned here – “not”. People answered that they do not consider themselves intellectuals, professionals, or “I am not self-employed, I am an

employee”, etc. I think that **speaking of criteria, denial of certain criteria can also be included in a study at the level of search features.**

What was interesting in that study? The highest level of self-identification with the middle class was observed among youths – under 28 years old. There was quite a big difference across regions. That is why in further studies, the question on self-assessment of one’s financial situation is asked in relation to the place of residence of respondents as well as in comparison with the average in Ukraine. This is due to the fact that today the residents of low-income regions tend to underestimate their financial situation because they understand that in their *oblast* (for example, Vinnytsia or Khmelnytskyi), the standard of living is somewhat lower. Therefore, when piloting and looking for identification criteria of the middle class, the previous studies should be considered.

Middle class and its defining features. I think that in fact, a rather sufficient correlation between the attitude and financial situation can be traced. **Higher ranking of the financial situation a priori means greater support for the government, whatever it may be, and higher level of support for market economy and democratic norms.** Usually people with better financial situation are more broad-minded, have higher level of education; also there exists a clear mutual influence of all these indicators.

I would also like to address the issue of using the term “mature middle class”. In this case, we discuss the criteria, and, therefore, can determine its “core” and “periphery”. The issue of mature middle class is considered, in particular, by Olena Yakuba (a well-known sociologist and a founder of the Kharkiv School of Sociology). She says that representatives of the “mature middle class” are *aware* of themselves, their interests and values, and are able to form standards, aims, and objectives of their activities.

You can argue or disagree with that but the problem of self-identification of the middle class emerges, and we return to the issue of self-identification criteria. Back to the answers why people do not consider themselves middle class – let me remind you that financial situation and substantial property were ranked first.

However, I think that along with these criteria, lifestyle characteristics are very important, and we should seek criteria to describe them. Indeed, we need questions related to healthy lifestyle, not just a summer holiday. Characteristics of entrepreneurial activity, attitudes – are also important.

I think if it is possible to conduct such a study, it would make sense to use not only quantitative but also qualitative methods which should precede the selection of quantitative indicators. Not only expert assessment but also the possibility to conduct qualitative interviews with those who describe themselves as middle class, in order to understand the informative context of the criteria which they use to self-identify as middle class.



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CONSENSUS DEPRIVATION INDICES SHOULD BE APPLIED TO THE STUDY OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

I think it would be interesting to know what Ukrainians think of the Ukrainian middle class, and in this context, to whom and which class they relate. Probably, to obtain answers to these questions, we should turn to the methods and principles that are applied to poverty measurement based on living conditions, in particular consensus deprivation indices.⁹

Everyone has probably heard of these indices – just let me remind you quickly. The idea is that experts put together a long list of certain goods (i.e. the first stage is still the expert one). In this study (of the middle class), goods may mean anything – even elements of a psychological portrait. I say “goods” because in the context of poverty, they are mostly of tangible nature.

In the second stage, during the survey, from the list provided, the respondents choose only those goods, which they consider necessary not to feel poor. At the same time, they answer questions whether they have them, and whether they think it is necessary for them to have them.

Then, during the analysis stage, special statistical methods are applied – in particular, using consensus and private control, only those components (a short list of parameters is formed out of the long list) are marked that most respondents consider necessary during poverty measurement based on living conditions.

Is it possible to apply this approach to the study of the middle class? I think it would be quite interesting to see what the concept of the Ukrainian middle class means for the society, and how the society fits in it.



⁹ Deprivation is the removal of access to certain goods (products and services), especially to the systems of education and healthcare. The construction of indices of consensus deprivation is one of the application methods of the subjective approach to poverty measurement, which is widely used in Europe, and recently – in Ukraine as well. The index is based on surveying respondents on the list of questions related to consumption and lifestyle. For more details see, for example – Poverty Measurement in Ukraine: Criteria, Challenges and Prospects. Working paper 12, 22 November 2013, http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/ge.15/2013/WP_12_Ukraine_D_Ru.pdf – Ed.

IT IS NECESSARY TO RELATE THE PUBLIC IDEA OF THE MIDDLE CLASS TO ITS THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

I can add something here. This method is often used in market research surveys. For example, in the beginning of the questionnaire, a scale of subjective assessment of the financial situation is presented – “we have to save even on food”, “we have enough for food, to buy essential clothing and shoes; we have to save or borrow money”, etc. In the end of the questionnaire, after the main set of questions, there is a question on what amount of income relates to these assessment levels. So, the focus itself is changing – this is not only self-identification with a certain level of financial situation but also how the respondents define certain levels in financial terms. I think if we turn the focus of the identification criteria of the middle class to this area, we can understand the variation of parameters and criteria within each category of the class. Basically, that is why complex latent classes and multiple indices of social and economic status are built – to discover the weight of various parameters (for example, education, income, and types of employment) under specific conditions. Indeed, **in Ukraine, there exists an imbalance between high level of education and high level of income, which does not correspond to the Western model for middle class.** So, the most important thing here is to understand how various criteria even in popular perceptions relate to the concept of a particular class.



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WHEN STUDYING POST-SOVIET SOCIETIES, A SCALE CONTAINING THE “WORKING CLASS” CATEGORY SHOULD BE APPLIED

When speaking on the identification criteria of the middle class, it is very important to understand why and what for we are doing this, and within which coordinate system. If it comes to defining the middle class in terms of the “upper – middle – lower” scale, we should consider the post-Soviet conditions of development of our society.

In this context, I think it is appropriate (when using the concept of Tatyana Zaslavskaya¹⁰) to identify another group – the basic stratum. The employed people fall into it – those who have sufficiently stable employment but by the level of material wellbeing are in the third category,



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¹⁰ T.I. Zaslavskaya (1927-2013) was a renowned scholar, economist, and sociologist, Academician of the RAS, founder of the All-Union Public Opinion Research Centre (1987). – Ed.

i.e. “we have enough money for food and essential commodities but it is already difficult to buy durables”. Moreover, the category *stratum* is more appropriate for the “upper – middle – lower” stratification scale since the term class always implies a “theoretical burden”: *class* is defined as the combination of a position (in the social structure) and consciousness (relevant values, goals, behaviours).

In other words, the use of the category class in a variety of sociological concepts – from classic Marxist and neo-Marxist ideas (where class is a position in the system of ownership and the structure of class activities) to Weberian and Goldthorpean stratification schemes (where class is an analytical category of classification by the position of employment) – implies the need to clearly identify and determine the category of the “middle class”. For example, if *the position of employment* is the key criterion for identification of the middle class, it will establish two fundamentally different subtypes of the middle class. In the first case, employment is also an analytical category of the so-called “new middle class” of intellectuals and the creative class, i.e. those who have higher education and produce some important intellectual products. They are professionals, experts, intellectuals, and people of creative professions. In the second case, they are the so-called “old middle class” of owners and employers of small and medium scale – bourgeoisie, owners, small and medium-sized businesses, which are exactly the “four not” mentioned above.

Self-identification criteria as a principle for affiliation with the middle class. Here, it is very important to consider the semantic stratification of the Soviet culture and its post-Soviet transformation. In the Soviet culture (for example, Yuriy Levada’s work “*A Simple Soviet Man*”, published in Moscow in 1993), the idea that middle class is “just like everyone else” was dominant. This is especially important for the post-Soviet space. Does comparing oneself with people of immediate social circle and following “live like everyone else” or “not worse than the others” rules represent the core of self-identification with the middle class – regardless of employment, ownership, level of material consumption, and lifestyle?

If a special study is possible, it is important to test these semantic content criteria for self-identification with the middle class. Another category that should be measured is how appropriate is it to apply the “working class” category on the “upper – middle – lower” self-identification scale. And when the scale is presented as “upper – middle – lower – working class”, what do respondents mean by “working class”? Self-identification with the middle class does not necessarily mean employment in the industrial sector. In the context of post-Soviet transformation, it is very likely that if there is work the respondent is paid for, for him this will automatically mean – I am *working* class.

That is a subjective shift in the division of our analytical notion of what we mean by the term “working class”; when we add this category to the “upper, middle, lower” scale for a respondent, we add a classic typology error on different grounds.

I think, when using the category “middle class” without reference to the sociological concepts of the class but in terms of the “upper – middle – lower” stratification scale, it will be efficient to use the scale which, in addition to the upper, middle, and lower categories, also includes a “basic stratum” (Tatyana Zaslavskaya’s concept of stratification of the Soviet and post-Soviet society). This will allow us to describe the category of the middle stratum in a post-Soviet society more clearly, and for people, it could become a rather appropriate category of reference. I have not seen any empirical studies that would test this stratification scheme, since it is not beneficial from a political point of view – why we study the middle class.

If we study the middle class politically, we want to say that we are moving towards a democratic society where middle class represents a major basic structure that shares democratic values and serves as a stabiliser for the market economy. We have roughly the same numbers as in the UK and U.S., especially in terms of “upper – middle – lower” self-identification scale. However, will it correspond to the semantic context of operating the “middle class” category, if in the context of the post-Soviet society content characteristics of this stratum differ significantly?

For example, the class structure in the UK, stable for centuries – with its very peculiar history of development, aristocracy, monarchy, pride in one’s class position, stable categories for self-identification with the middle class – still plays an important role. It is a different story in the American society, where the concept and notion of the middle class is one of the ideas of the meritocratic society where a position can be taken and achieved with one’s efforts and merits. Middle class is something to strive for, and is prestigious in general.

Therefore, if we study middle class to describe the stratification structure of the modern society, we should develop a scheme that would be based on the class approaches of Erik Olin Wright and John Goldthorpe, with more complex and simple ways of identification discussed above. Or try to test whether Tatyana Zaslavskaya’s concept works, which provides for the “basic stratum” – not the lower, which no one wants to identify with, if using the criteria “like everyone else” – representatives of one’s social circle and of the same level, but not yet middle class, based on objective criteria.



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THE CHOICE OF INDICATORS FOR STUDYING COMPLEX PHENOMENA AND PROCESSES DEPENDS ON THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

From a philosophical point of view, middle class in any society is a multidimensional phenomenon, and therefore, the term has many definitions, meanings, and interpretations. One should agree that the definition of this phenomenon and the choice of the criteria to measure it depends on the specific objectives of the study. For example, when speaking of its scale, in one respect (say, in terms of income level), that is a certain part of the population that is well-defined in size, when in the other respect (say, in terms of education level and culture), its size may be significantly different. Just like poverty: according to one approach and relevant criteria – it is relative, and according to another approach and relevant criteria – absolute. Respectively, the incidence of poverty can be 30% in the first case and 10% in the other.

Therefore, **when it comes to measuring problem, I think, first of all, we need to decide what aspects of the middle class are the subject of the study.** Why and what for we identify middle class and measure its characteristics – for if we measure it “in general”, it is inevitable that there will be a lot of complaints, and the result will not satisfy us anyway. It is necessary to define the aspects of a phenomenon that interests us, and this will imply deciding what indicators should be used.

As to the adaptability of the applied methods and procedures of measurement. This issue has been repeatedly raised, including during international roundtables, when discussing the methods of measuring the level of human development, poverty, etc. There are various approaches, there are simplified measurement methods, simplified dependencies, and quantitative and qualitative methods.

Expert discussion, 19 June 2014



We should consider that simplified approaches derive from more accurate approaches. For example, we have accurate, detailed studies based on, say, one hundred indicators, and we have proved that we are describing this phenomenon quite accurately. However, we understand (and we have proved) that if we apply not a hundred indicators but ten or five of

Expert discussion, 19 June 2014

them (that are defining and significant in relation to the measuring aspect of this phenomenon) to the study, we will obtain roughly same results, only with a slightly higher error. So, if we are OK with this error (which is controlled), we can apply a simplified approach and measure only these five or ten indicators. However, if we know nothing or almost nothing about this phenomenon, generally we should not discuss a simplified approach to its measurement. **We apply those methods that we can afford at most, given the funding, qualifications and experience of experts, communication, timeframe, etc.** We should also understand that in case of disastrous deficiency of at least one of the above resources, research objectives may not be reached (of course, this can also happen with all the necessary resources).



Considering the above, I think when examining the middle class, in this case we should not give up quantitative methods and indicators (although it has not been mentioned today) in favour of qualitative as simpler ones. We should – if possible – apply both quantitative and qualitative measurements as it will increase the likelihood of success. We should not ignore the fact that some quantitative assessments may allow to consider the available external information during data processing, such as demographic statistics. This, in turn, will provide the potential for reducing the amount of offsets in the assessment of key indicators. Moreover, in some cases, quantitative and qualitative assessments can be marked by offsets in different directions (different characters), and then their joint use may also allow to obtain a more accurate assessment of the phenomenon.

As to our experience in this kind of research, over the last three or four years, we have been involved in the assessment of consumer spending of the affluent strata of the population of Ukraine. As it is known, the relevance of this kind of research in developed countries has increased significantly during the financial crisis in 2008-2009 and thereafter. Obviously, there is a whole bunch of problems here, just as with middle class – definitions, criteria, limits, scale, etc. The choice of subjects is also problematic, and there is a lack of specialised information. So, in such a situation, an acceptable way can be only a comprehensive use of information from all the accessible (and trustworthy) sources as well as an integrated use of the existing quantitative and qualitative methods. The properties of theoretical distribution are also useful (for example,

a well-known lognormal distribution of household income or expenditure) as well as the country-specific set of empirical correlations – for example, the structure of distribution of the household expenditure by main groups of goods and services. Some qualitative approaches and indicators are also used.

I would like to note that **we are building a fairly complex system of methods and indicators** not to describe the affluent strata of the population of Ukraine in general but to address a very specific problem. Namely, **to assess the impact of the undercounting of consumer spending of affluent households in state surveys** (which is mainly due to refusing to present information or participate in surveys) **on the main indicators of the standard of living and differentiation of the population by income** as well as to develop procedures to improve reliability of the corresponding results of state surveys. To solve the other problem, we would most likely have to build another system of methods and indicators.



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DIFFERENT APPROACHES MAY PRODUCE RESULTS SIMILAR IN VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The title of the research project contains the term “democratic standards” – that is on the subject of the cause and effect relationship... I worked on the issue of democracy, and today’s discussion reminds me of serious discussions among political scientists on “measuring democracy”. How to measure democracy? There is a maximalist approach, a minimalist one, different ways of measuring – with a large number of indicators, with a small number of indicators... In fact, there was a very interesting study which showed that most democracy indices, despite all the methodological differences, are closely correlated with each other – with a correlation coefficient above 0.9. Of course, one should look at the aim of the study but, as the Englishmen say, let us not split hairs, or, in other words, let us not argue over trivial differences? Shall we further deepen the efforts with expected payoff? How all of this may then affect democracy?

I would also like to ask you to have education as a control variable. I understand, you would very much like to include education in the indicators of the middle class, but my point of view is that this variable should be controlled. Since **most studies consider education to be a very important indicator associated with social structure, which affects the value of democracy. If we incorporate it in an index, it will dissolve...**

UKRAINIAN MIDDLE CLASS IN THE EYES OF ITS REPRESENTATIVES: IDENTIFICATION AND SELF-IDENTIFICATION CRITERIA (BASED ON THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS)

In the framework of the project “*Middle Class in Ukraine: Life Values, Readiness for Association, and Promotion of Democratic Standards*”, six focus groups were held – two in Kyiv, two in Lviv, one in Odesa, and one in Kharkiv.¹

The main objective of the study was to identify the following in the process of group discussions:

- the range of ideas, thoughts, and attitudes of the participants to the middle class as a concept and a phenomenon;
- criteria for their self-identification as representatives of the middle class;
- ideas on the characteristics and features, life values, interests and aspirations of the middle class in Ukraine;
- attitude of the participants of the discussion as representatives of the middle class towards other social classes and strata of Ukrainian society.

Another objective is to compare the views, definitions, etc. expressed by the participants of the discussion with the concept of the middle class that is prevalent in Ukrainian scientific literature, journalism, and political discourse.

People of active working age (aged 30-50) who identified themselves with middle class, have higher or vocational education, are employed in various areas, have a permanent job or their own business, and average monthly wage above UAH 2500 per each family member, were invited to participate in the focus groups. Among the participants of the focus groups were self-employed persons, employees of both public and private institutions and companies, freelancers (painters, lawyers, translators), teachers, lecturers, doctors, engineers, military personnel, civil servant, and employees of the service and trade industry.

To boost the discussion and encourage the participants to express their opinions, several methods were used – associations with the concept “the middle class in Ukraine”; explaining “the middle class” to a hypothetical interlocutor; outlining the structure of the Ukrainian society in terms social classes; comparing the middle class with other classes (strata) of Ukrainian society; and comparing the Ukrainian and European middle class.

Presented below is a brief description of the course and findings of the discussions concerning the level of familiarisation of the participants with the concept of the middle class and criteria which they used in defining this concept and justifying their belonging to Ukrainian middle class.²

¹ The groups consisted of 9-10 participants and were mixed on the basis of age and gender. In general, 56 persons (including 31 women and 25 men) participated in the discussions.

² In the text, Kyiv and Lviv groups are labelled Kyiv-1 and Kyiv-2, Lviv-1 and Lviv-2.

Other findings will be published in the next publication provided for by the project as well as summarised in the special issue of the *National Security & Defence* journal, devoted to results of the project.

MIDDLE CLASS IN UKRAINE: THE PREVALENCE AND RELEVANCE OF THE NOTION

Judging by what the focus group participants said at initial stages of discussion, they receive little information on the middle class from the mass media, do not use the term in their everyday life and/or for their self-identification, view the division of society into classes with caution, do not consider it important to be associated with the middle class.

But despite those facts, the panellists discussing different issues revealed rather clear ideas and reasonable assessments of the middle class. This shows that the **notion of the middle class is used not only in political or sociological discourse but also publicly, in everyday life.**

1. Most panellists admitted that they seldom come across information about the Ukrainian middle class in the mass media. Such an information appears “mainly before the elections”, in the context of development of the small and medium-sized business or fighting poverty. In the election period, politicians appeal to the middle class “because the middle class is considered a stable stratum, and politicians believe that they can rely on it. It is thought like that all over the world” (Kyiv-2). At the same time, it was noted that Ukrainian politicians always promise support to the middle class, but in reality, during elections, “rely only on pensioners and the poor” (Kyiv-2), that is why the mass media tends to mention the poor and the lower class more often.

Beyond the elections, many panellists believe that the mass media often reports on representatives of the higher class, oligarchs, while the middle class is mentioned only in studies of different commodity and financial markets.

Odesa

“— I do not hear much of the middle class.

...

— Why? We often hear that small and medium business needs help.

— Always, before elections”.

Kyiv-2

“[We hear about the middle class] before elections more often, otherwise — rarely...”

Lviv-1

“[We hear] not often... When they speak about small and medium business...”

Lviv-2

“I hear, they say... Not too often, sometimes mentioned in the press”.

Kyiv-1

“They often say, ‘below poverty line’. Mass media mainly speaks about the poor”.

“... Zombify with poverty”.

Kharkiv

“I’ve just recalled, because I am concerned about it, that the middle class stopped buying cars...”.

“[When they speak] about some big purchases. Something about investments made by the middle class — that the middle class began to invest less in specific resources”.

Odesa

“— We now hear about the upper class more often...

— Mainly, about oligarchs”.

2. The attitude of the panellists towards the concept of the “middle class” (in fact, the social and class division of society as such) varies. Some participants in each group showed a rather negative attitude (“humiliating”) towards the division of society into classes and the “middle class” per se, describing it a contrived, artificial (“newspaper-like”), pointless notion, introduced for the needs of the upper class, the authorities, “...to make it easier to manage, control and make others pay taxes”.

Odesa

“Division into classes is humiliating. It may make sense for statistics, for management”.

“Division into classes was invented because the people wanted bread and circuses. To find out which bread and circuses are wanted by each class”.

“In other words, what most of our politicians do perfectly is play on the needs of different classes. And they do play”.

“It’s pure manipulation”.

Kyiv-1

“This is for the upper class, for the elite, for the elite to understand how the people live, to be managed easier. To calm down or to stir up in the required direction”.

Lviv-1

“I think, for the middle class to pay taxes. It is necessary, it is mentioned, when it is supposed to pay for something”

“It (the notion of “the middle class”) is top on mind, but it does not have the... background as the notion”.

Kyiv-2

“The middle class is an expression from newspapers, from literature”.

“Something big is to be manipulated on the state level — clear thing, it is easier to rest on the middle class, because the middle class is bigger”.

Other participants reported a positive attitude to the “middle class” and to that phenomenon as such, calling the middle class necessary for a democratic state, economic development and social stability.

Kyiv-1

“The middle class is the basis of a democratic state. If we want to be a normal democratic state, we should seek to form the middle class. So we should think who they are, before we nurture the middle class in this country”.

Kharkiv

“This is the level of the country development, [this] notion”.

“The more representatives of the middle class there are — the wealthier the country is, the better the national economy will work. That is, the middle class are the people who make and spend money”.

“It remains the way we were taught at school: the middle class is what the society can rely on. Including politicians and economists, too. Something they can rely on”.

3. The term “middle class” is rarely used in everyday communication; most of the panellists and people around them, as a rule, do not raise the issue of their status in terms of social classes. They more often refer to the people like them as “average”, “ordinary”, “normal”, “busy bees”, and to others – as “rich/poor”, or “simply: they have / do not have the money”. Only one participant reported using the term “middle class” in his milieu.

Kyiv-2

“Talking to friends, we never call ourselves like that. There are poor friends, and rich friends”.

“In the public, when a few people meet, they do not use such words at all”.

“What we begin talking who we think we are, we call ourselves the ‘middle class’”.



4. The majority of panellists consider the social and class identity as unimportant: “What matters to us is the income, not the class we belong to” (*Kyiv-1*). Those who do not care about their affiliation with the middle class were in the majority in all focus groups.

Meanwhile, up to one third of participants in each group adhered to a different opinion, reasoning the importance of their affiliation with the middle class by the need of self-identification in society, feeling one’s place in the “friend or foe” coordinates, psychological convenience of “being with a group” (“I feel more confident that way”), or care “how you are seen by others”.

Odesa

“This is important for me, because if a man is not on the same intellectual platform as I am, I do not want to step down, I feel uncomfortable. By the virtue of my profession, I can pay attention to the lower class, too, but I will not stay in that stratum. I do not want to go up either, because it is not my platform, too. It is important for me to be up my alley, at my place”.

“I feel it psychologically more comfortable to be with equals, too. You feel kind of poor and miserly with oligarchs, and it is not too pleasant to be with hobos”.

Kyiv-1

“...I have to identify myself. To bring him [son] up later. If we do not think about that, we will fall down to the lower class”.

Kyiv-2

“At heart, every man cares how he is seen”.

Also, the arguments were cited **moving affiliation with the middle class beyond personal self-identification by making an emphasis on the social importance of the middle class stratum**:

- “It is important for a man to feel like the middle class not only for his own self-esteem, but also to survive in hard conditions. You put yourself higher, you want to be the middle class, you seek it. And your children seek it, too. We all seek it, the whole nation does. As soon as the middle class is established, our problems will come to an end” (*Lviv-1*).
- “Well, it is important to me, because it is important to somehow position myself in society. It is important because the state has declared a system of development for the middle class. Because we seek democracy through civil society. And the civil society rests on the middle class” (*Odesa*).

Therefore, discussing “middle class”, the focus group participants tried to formulate its definition and to outline the key social functions of the middle class in Ukraine, suggesting that it should make the basis of a democratic state and civil society.

“MIDDLE CLASS IN UKRAINE”: ASSOCIATIONS

The panellists’ free associations with this term were indicative of their perception of the middle class in Ukraine. Generalisation of these associations makes it possible to find some common traits, and to single out issues to be covered in more detail during further discussions.

1. Associations of the panellists were varied and of different complexity. That said, simple associations may conventionally be divided into a few subject groups:

- **associated with specific professional or social groups** – “they are teachers, doctors” (*Kyiv-1*), “teachers, state servants” (*Lviv-2*), “public sector employees” (*Kharkiv*), and with established position in the social hierarchy – “the social status” (*Odesa*);
- **associated with feeling “average, like the rest”**: “the golden mean” (*Kyiv-1*, *Odesa*); “the bulk of the population”, “rank-and-file people” (*Kyiv-2*); “those who have average salaries, that is, not much and not little” (*Kharkiv*);
- **“the American dream”** (by the way, it was the association given in one group): “I immediately imagine a good house, maybe in the country, ideal family conditions” (*Kyiv-2*); “A picture: a small house, green grass, neighbours call one another ...” (*Lviv-1*); “A beach, rest on the seaside under a parasol...” (*Lviv-2*).

Complex associations combined several features of the middle class at a time – e.g., stable wages and social status, confidence in the future, spare time, etc. In particular, the middle class is associated, among other things, with development, progress, and self-improvement.

Kyiv-1

“People with stable wages, work, with an established place in society, a certain cell. They have some cultural experience, skills, and continue to progress, do not mark time”.

Kyiv-2

“They have more spare time. Confidence in the future. Stability. That is, if you reach a certain level, a man keeps on developing. It means, not to stop, to grow further”.

2. Almost all the groups revealed the associations prompted by doubts about the existence of the middle class in Ukraine. The panellists spoke of the Ukrainian middle class either in past or future tense, stressing that the middle class in present Ukraine does not comply with its definition, especially in terms of income; second, they noted the difficulties of its establishment, lack of state support; and third, the panellists stressed the predominance of the lower class in society – which resonates with the above-said opinions that “politicians tend to rely on the lower class”.

Kyiv-1

“Inexistent. At a very low level, below average”.

“...The middle class with revenues below average”.

Lviv-1

“The middle class has actually been destroyed here. In principle, there was one, partially”.

“It is pending all the time but never born”.

“To me, it is much poorer than in Europe”.

“For me, the middle class means a man who can generate and implement some idea. I beg you pardon, he risks his money, his health. And in this country, it is left for its own devices”.

Odesa

“A dying class”.

“In my opinion, unborn. Something inexistent”.

Kharkiv

“It’s absence. The middle class should be numerous. But it is too small here”.

Kyiv-2

“...Between bad and very bad”.

“Elimination of the middle class. Big companies seize markets and press the middle class out. It...has to step down to the lower class. Social division – the middle class is also pressed out by the mass culture, music videos of low culture are shot, because the lower class is more numerous. They are the main consumers, everything is done for them... The middle class is suppressed”.

3. Meanwhile, the panellists revealed some primary associations dealing with social functions of the middle class: “civil society”, “the social and economic basis of the state” (*Odesa*), “the city-forming structure of a normal society” (*Kyiv-1*). One focus group stressed **the importance of the middle class for Ukraine as a state**; at that, the middle class was termed “the state-builder” on the one hand, and the state was entrusted with the task of building the middle class on the other. At the same time, it was believed to be the task for citizens as well.

Lviv-1

“It is the element entrusted with state-building, actually... Those people who actually pay taxes”.

“It is probably a plan, to be implemented by the state. It must appear, sooner or later. It must be... Either we are the state, or we are not”.

“After all, the whole civilised world lives like that. There must be a middle class. Because, I beg your pardon, you either are a hobo, the way he used to be, or an oligarch. All attention should be paid to the growth [of the middle class]... Maybe a new generation will come, now under 30, who, I beg your pardon, will be unwilling to live like slaves. That class is in germ now... But that may be the task for the people, not for the state”.

“I believe that they are the people who want to have something done. And if the state somehow allows, they themselves do that”.

4. Nearly a third of all associations reported by the focus group participants in one way or another are dealing with income, financial standing, property ownership. At that, employment and work were mentioned as the main source of income. Out of more than 50 associations, only 10% related to entrepreneurship or business ownership; the rest referred to employment and hired labour.

Kyiv-1

“People who can live with it, do not starve, have a high material standing”.

“Ideally — it is a good material standing”.

Kyiv-2

“More money than with the poor, but not enough to be very rich”.

“Just ‘wages’”.

Lviv-1

“They are people who in the future can buy some immovable property. Within some limited period”.

Kharkiv

“People who earn enough money to buy food. Some small needs. But it is very difficult to buy something serious”.

“A possibility to earn money and to save something for big purchases”.

“People who have an apartment, who can afford travelling. Maybe not too frequently but at least once a year, yes”.

By and large, it should be noted that as the discussion developed, the issue of income came to the fore as the main criterion for identification of the middle class.

NOTION OF THE “MIDDLE CLASS IN UKRAINE”: EXPLAINING TO A HYPOTHETICAL INTERLOCUTOR

The focus group participants offered more detailed definitions and held heated discussions explaining to a hypothetical interlocutor what the middle class looks like in Ukraine. In that case, the detailed definitions were given containing certain signs and criteria to describe and distinguish representatives of the Ukrainian middle class.

They mentioned, *inter alia*, education, stability, the nature of employment, social importance of specific professions, but the focus was on income and property ownership.

It should be added that under any assessment of the income level, property or assets ownership, the overwhelming majority of panellists stressed that wealth comes from work and wages. In other words, representatives of the Ukrainian middle class are described as hired labour, and rarely – as businessmen.

1. As noted above, during the discussion its focus shifted towards the income and property (belongings) as the main criteria for identification of the middle class: “The middle class means income” (*Lviv-1*). However, the discussion revealed contradictions as to what income range should be considered middle class.

In particular, the **average income** was suggested as an indicator. However, it was mentioned in one group only and found no substantial support among other participants.

Kyiv-1

“A man with an average income that helps meeting the most wanted human needs”.

“The name comes from the level of income — an average income. All the rest is added”.

The majority of participants in all groups agreed that “a certain level of income” should be the criterion for belonging to the middle class (*Lviv-1*). Sometimes they even quoted the concrete sums: “I think that the middle class is to earn UAH 5000 and more per person [family member]” (*Kharkiv*); “Own dwelling plus income of, say, UAH 2000-3000 a month per family member” (*Lviv-1*).

In other cases, they listed the needs, which they think a salary of a representative of the middle class should cover. At that, some participants produced a rather modest list of needs, referring to the income, which would provide for a standard of living at the subsistence level.

Lviv-1

“I am a teacher, kind of a state servant. I want no stars from the sky. Give me a decent salary that will keep me up... I do not want to rest somewhere at expensive resorts and so on. It is enough if I can pay taxes wanted by the state, make some savings, be able to buy better clothes, to spend my vacation in the Carpathians. I do not want ‘something’. Give me that subsistence level”.

However, most participants argued that the income of the middle class representative should cover not only the primary needs of a family (foodstuffs, clothing, housing, etc.) but also make it possible to save money to buy things such as housing, a car, a country house, to pay for vacation, and to make savings.



Lviv-1

“...I guess that the middle class are men who can afford saving money for some, so to say, more expensive purchase. Men who can pay utilities and not deny themselves clothing, foods, something else...”.

“Well, probably, he can always lay something aside for vacation”.

“This is a man who, I am sorry, has satisfied his physiological needs, spiritual ideas. Who does not deny himself anything. For instance, my son is earning, he is a programmer, he refers himself to the middle class. He can afford vacation in Poland. He can afford renting an apartment (he began to live on his own). And feels good, of course...”.

“The middle class may also have a car”.

Lviv-2

“...I guess that he can buy housing, so to say... decent. Half for saved money and on credit ... Because you cannot buy it with savings alone... But half of it is something that distinguishes [the middle class]...”.

“...It’s still housing, but not on credit. This is a car, but when needed... not when you collect [the money]”.

Odesa

“This is a man who works tirelessly, and has a small car, a studio...”.

Kyiv-2

“This is a man who gets decent wages, has a family, a vacation, a small country house, a small car”.

“Presence of a car, an apartment and a country house”.

However, the discussion participants often expressed **doubts whether the income of the Ukrainian middle class representative meets those requirements.** The most common doubt dealt with the ability of an “average Ukrainian” to buy a house – despite its apparent necessity and important place among basic human needs.

Lviv-2

“The middle class – if the living standard in Ukraine allows... the main necessities of life, that is, foodstuffs, some clothing, footwear, payment for utilities. Some modest rest during vacation. But they cannot buy an expensive foreign car for themselves, a separate apartment for their children... study abroad...”.

“...I cannot call myself a poor person, although I cannot afford to buy a car with my salary... That is, I can take it on credit, as well as a dwelling for my children...”.

Odesa

“He cannot afford anything substantial”.

“...He can afford to buy something to eat and more, but not a car or apartment! So our middle class is rather unprivileged, too”.

“Houses and apartments of the middle class, as a rule, were obtained as far back as in the Soviet times”.

“Those were flats received from the state in the Soviet Union”.

“The middle class cannot afford to buy an apartment, to earn for it now”.

“They can get housing space only as heritage”.



The discussion on the level of income and wellbeing as a criteria for association with (belonging to) the middle class was in some way summed up with a definition formulated by one female panellist: **“The middle class means an apartment, not on credit but bought out, a car, a country house, a possibility to have a vacation twice a year, to have and keep up two children and a stable job”** (Kyiv-2). All focus group members agreed with this definition.

2. A sufficient number of focus group participants tried to explain the notion of the middle class in Ukraine with the nature of their occupation, job and activities, which usually require gaining qualifications from higher education institutions. In particular, the participants had no doubt that the businessmen (people who have their own albeit small business) belong to the middle class. Meanwhile, affiliation of hired workers with the middle class raised some doubts – although the participants eventually agreed that the middle class may include both businessmen and hired workers, depending on their income level.

Kyiv-1

“A man should have higher education, stable wages, sufficient for something: foodstuffs, clothes, education of a child and learning. Most likely, he is a hired worker, in 95% of cases”.

Kyiv-2

“I think as a director... I think not as those who work but as those who run business. For me, working people are not the middle class. They are the lower class who may be subdivided, too... The middle class are private businessmen who have subordinates. The middle class has the wealth – houses, cars, apartments. And responsibility, too...”.

Kharkiv

“The middle class are the people who run some small business. This means that they are not related with the state. They somehow keep afloat, that is, earn money for themselves...”.

Lviv-2

“The middle class means own business...”.

Discussions also arose about the affiliation of teachers, doctors, and state servants with the middle class. As noted above, those occupational groups were even mentioned as the first association with the notion of “the middle class”, but their affiliation with that class caused doubts due to low pay and therefore, low income.

The panellists also noted that higher education does not automatically guarantee a sufficient income to maintain the standard of living characteristic of the middle class in Ukraine. In this context, they expressed doubts whether the higher education was necessary for a representative of the middle class, in other words – if higher education should be a criterion for belonging to the middle class.

Lviv-2

“I have the impression that here in Ukraine, the middle class is viewed a bit incorrectly. Teachers and state servants are far from the middle class in this country. They are lower”.

“Not in this country... Higher education abroad means something, physicians and all the rest earn there much more than here...”.

Summing up the statements about occupational groups, which the majority of participants considered the middle class: they mainly spoke of those engaged in non-manual, creative work that requires appropriate education, skills and certain personal qualities.

Kharkiv

“This is a man with good higher education, with a good job. The middle class are engineers, scientists, who kind of develop the country, move it forward”.

Lviv-1

“...The middle class are mainly men and women possessing some education, some business, or something thanks to their work. It may be creative work. Say, writers. You see, if a man... how shall I put it? If he is a strong personality, he cannot but earn income. A strong personality can make it”.

Kyiv-2

“They are the people who generate ideas, not only do mechanical work...”

3. Describing the middle class in Ukraine, the panellists also focused on certain lifestyle trends of its representatives. In particular, it was noted that the middle class are the people who have cultural demands (and can have them satisfied); they are creative, pursue personal growth and development. In fact, these statements retained the points raised earlier during the discussion of associations with the middle class.

Kyiv-2

“This is a man who should be interested in something except his work. He also has a possibility to attend cultural events, to spend part of his salary on himself, his soul and body...”.

“...They are fond of creation, go to the cinema and theatre, write verses ...”.

Odesa

“They have goals, dreams, they progress...”.

If at the previous stage the notion of “the middle class” was primarily associated with civil society, the detailed explanations of this concept dealt with its representatives’ activity, their desire to be part of processes taking place in the country.

Kyiv-2

“They are also interested in processes taking place in the country and have some influence on those processes. Willing to influence the developments in the country”.

“They are the people who influence the developments in the country. ...I believe that although it is not present in this country, this is the main stratum of society. Then, the living standard in that country is satisfactory”.

Odesa

“It’s an organic class, it moves something, seeks something, the driving force...”.

MIDDLE CLASS IN UKRAINE: SELF-IDENTIFICATION CRITERIA

Self-identification of an individual in terms of his social status (a subjective “feeling of one’s place” in a social hierarchy) represents one dimension of personal identity, and a recognised criterion of affiliation with one or another class, in this case – middle class. Hence, the criteria (motives) for self-identification, being of particular interest to research on the “subjective middle class”, were proposed to the focus group participants as a subject for discussion. The participants also mentioned criteria whilst discussing other issues, in particular – comparing the social standing of middle class with lower and upper class in Ukraine as well as comparing the Ukrainian and European middle class.³

Noteworthy, when discussing the Ukrainian society in terms of “upper – middle – lower” class division, the participants almost unanimously excluded the marginal groups and oligarchs.

At that, it was said that there are no simply “rich” or “well-off” people in Ukraine – there is a gap between more or less well-off, and overly rich. According to focus group participants, the breach between middle class and lower class (“the poor”) is rather conventional and shaky. The middle class is on the edge of becoming the lower class due to the instability of its socio-economic standing, which in turn is prompted by general situation in the country: “I am between the lower and the middle [classes], because the economic situation is very unstable” (*Kyiv-2*).

Generalisation of the participants’ statements makes it possible to single out the key motives for their self-identification as representatives of the Ukrainian middle class. Such motives may be divided into a few groups. The division is rather nominal: since it was a group discussion, its participants often complemented each other, producing a set of motives (criteria) for affiliation or self-affiliation with the middle class. Some of those motives (i.e. standard of living and education) were considered the main and often treated as the only criterion, so that they may be categorised into separate groups.

Among other things, the presented list of criteria for self-identification may portray the assessments of middle class in everyday social consciousness.

(1) The standard of living. Affiliation with the middle class on the basis of certain income level and material wellbeing corresponds to the so-called economic approach to the middle class, which focuses on measurements that are based on income and material possessions.



³ Speaking about the motives for social class identification, focus group participants sometimes referred to third parties, although the focus was on motives for self-identification.

The participants demonstrated that their self-identification is mostly based on standards of living (income, possession of movable / immovable property, savings, etc.). Actually all of them were aware of a sharp difference in income levels between the Ukrainian and European middle class, so they tried to proceed from Ukrainian realities.

Lviv-1

“But here, one should always keep in mind that this is for our specific Ukrainian conditions. One should all the time proceed from this point of reference. Because, say, I have a different point of reference, for my brother emigrated to Canada. And I, say, cannot go to Dominicana for a winter vacation, while he can, although... he is a state servant there”.

The material standing was named as the main criterion for affiliation with the middle class: “Wellbeing is the first criterion, auxiliary ones come next...” (*Lviv-2*); “Financial [capabilities] are true life” (*Kyiv-2*). At that, the material status attributes of the middle class included presence of a traditional set: own dwelling,⁴ a car, a country house (*dacha*). In other cases, the participants specified the level of income which they find sufficient enough to categorise themselves as middle class by listing the needs to be covered by such an income.

Among other material assets necessary for the middle class, they also mentioned the possession of securities and savings as a precondition for stability of one’s socioeconomic standing and confidence in the future. Noteworthy, absence of credits was also mentioned among such conditions. In particular, they often said that life “on credit”, for example, bars the borrower from being a representative of the middle class.

Kyiv-2

“Possession of an apartment, a car, a country house”.

“Possession of some securities”.

Odesa

“A car is an important indicator”.

“A certain level of wages”.

Lviv-1

“Money is enough for food for the whole family..., to buy something new for each season..., to pay for the child’s study..., to go on leave every year”.

Kharkiv

“Possession of funds...”

“I will add – may I at least once or twice a year go for vacation somewhere. That is, certain financial capabilities”.

Kyiv-1

“Only the level of wellbeing, because if we take pensioners who have low pensions... A pensioner may have connections, education, a family, but he is poor...”.

“I believe that if you have savings, you belong to middle class. They do not break even but lay something aside. This is the result of them earning and ...keeping spare money”.

⁴ For instance, a female participant in one group refused to recognise affiliation of her daughter with the middle class because her family had no dwelling of their own but had to hire it.

Sometimes the participants explained their affiliation with middle class by comparison of their wellbeing with that of other social groups. Noteworthy, in doing so, they mainly compared themselves with lower class and only sometimes – with richer stratum, upper class.

Lviv-1

“For instance, I, compared to... I just analyse how other people live. Only that way. Say, other people in Ukraine”.

“Looking at poorer people, yes – you set some criteria, so to speak – you see your place”.

Kharkiv

“I categorise myself [like that], because I have enough for food and to go on leave once [a year]. I guess that I do not suffer. There are people who live worse than I do, that is why I refer myself to that class”.

Lviv-1

“I... refer myself to the middle class, because I have an apartment, a have an average car, a job. That's all. That is, I do not fly for vacations to the Maldives or some other islands”.

Some participants considered the level of income as actually the only criterion necessary for self-identification with the middle class. From this perspective, an interesting dialogue took place in one Lviv group:

“...I am ...a teacher and a painter – so, I belong to the middle class. If I were only a painter, or only a teacher, I would find it hard.

– But for the additional earning, you would not have those revenues and would not consider yourself middle class, right?

– No, I would not.

– How would you categorise yourself then?

– Well, an intelligent person who lives in unbearable conditions. Makes it through somehow...”.

By and large, the focus groups produced an impression that some respondents somewhat oversimplify the mechanism of class self-identification by reducing it to purely material indicators. Such an approach leads to the logical conclusion that if a man's income drops or he loses a job or business, he automatically becomes lower class.

Kyiv-1

“Judging from my own experience, over the past 30 years each of us several times migrated from the middle to the lower class – because revenues fell, you are done out, lose money... So the boundaries may be somewhat diluted”.

Kyiv-2

“I lost my business and have no money to start a new one. I have to step down to the lower class”.



(2) The level of education and occupation. Self-identification in this group generally corresponds to the approach to the middle class as a social and professional group. As a rule, they also take into account the official position of a hired worker, while small and medium-sized business owners are referred to the middle class irrespective of their educational background. In fact, the businessmen in focus groups explained their self-identification as follows: “I belong to the middle class, because I am a private business owner” (*Kharkiv*). There was virtually no discussion of the educational qualification for businessmen.

By and large, education was mentioned mainly in combination with the standard of living, as the second most important criterion for self-identification.

However, there were also attempts to view education as a single main motive for affiliation with the middle class. In particular, some participants expressed confidence that a man with a good education (higher or specialised secondary) will always find an appropriate job and have a decent income. At that, they meant not just the mere presence of diploma but the quality of education, qualification and skills obtained – since nowadays, a diploma can be bought in Ukraine.

Kyiv-2

“The middle class are men with good education. Good education can give you a good job and a possibility of further development. Without good education you will always stay at the bottom”.

Kyiv-1

We realise, too, that [education] is necessary for our child and for us, to stay in that class. That is, to give education to the child, for him to have a job, to have a dwelling, to be able to progress further, for instance, to invest”.

Kyiv-1

“I understand education so that a man learned something and not necessarily has a diploma. He may complete five years and be a superb specialist. Half of our universities just issue diplomas... I mean the level of scholarship. The quality of education”.

“Regarding the higher class and its education: I watched a programme saying that half of diplomas in the Verkhovna Rada are fake!”.

“One can easily buy any diploma now”.

By contrast, if the education is really good, and a man is a skilled professional, the participants defending the primacy of education over the material criteria, suggested that in any case, even having lost a job or business, a man would not step down to the lower class, as described above, but preserve an opportunity to restore his usual social status.

Kyiv-2

“Look, a man lost his business but retained his skills, his brain, and if desired, he can regain all that”.

Lviv-2

“...One can buy a fancy car — and smash it. We live in such a state that it may happen that someone will come, send you to Siberia and take your house. But you have the endurance and a chance to start anew from scratch. No one will take it from you. People say, education, knowledge is not a burden. You have them, they are always with you”.

Other respondents expressed doubts whether a person with higher education can take a decent place in the social hierarchy in present-day Ukraine. They see education as a necessary but insufficient precondition that does not always guarantee a proper income: “I have a friend who has three higher educations and cannot find a proper job” (*Kyiv-2*).

As a demonstrative example of this mismatch between education and skills on the one hand and labour remuneration on the other, the respondents in each group primarily referred to teachers and doctors. These two occupations were mentioned by all participants as those that should belong to the middle class (doctors – to the upper), but in Ukraine, in contrast to Europe, their labour is not properly paid for, which, in particular, makes them to combine jobs, including unofficially.

Lviv-2

“In my opinion, there is an understanding that the middle class comes from the European values, for there, doctors and teachers belong to the middle class. So, we bring that to this country, too. But we fall short of their salaries, for some reason. Their level of education and all the rest — it’s for the middle class... The financial dimension alone falls short”.

“There is also a nuance that the majority of the middle class is under cover... Officially, they have low salaries, but those teachers or doctors [earn] from tutorship or operations. They reach the middle class, but officially — they belong to the lower class”.

Odesa

“Teachers were just thrown below poverty line. They are given such salaries that they have to take bribes. While they should be with the middle class...”.

“... Teachers, doctors — they are just surviving...”.

Kyiv-1

“The level of income should be high for all representatives of that profession. Budget-sustained occupations should also replenish the middle class”.

Kyiv-2

“Doctors, teachers, state servants lead the middle class”.

“If we go to Europe, it should be like there and in America. Doctors, lawyers... If you get higher education, for instance, if you are a physician, you automatically join the middle class. You have reached something. But here, if you have the diploma of a doctor, this does not mean that you have reached anything”.

(3) Psychological (notional) distancing from lower class. Analysing statements about the stratification of present-day Ukrainian society, one may come to a conclusion that the respondents negatively viewed the affiliation with lower class as something that lowers one's self-assessment and/or his perception by others. So, the reluctance to identify oneself with lower class ("the poor") also presents a strong criterion for self-identification with the middle class. In this case, a mechanism of psychological distancing from a negative identity and a desire to raise one's status in the eyes of others gets activated, even if an individual does not possess features specific to the middle class.

Lviv-2

"...In this country, few people will declare themselves poor, even here, in presence of others, with [a salary of] two thousand *hryvnias*, — and say that I am poor?! It's a bit shameful — that is why we say that we are the middle class, after all... Although to my mind, the middle class is something a bit higher..."

Kyiv-2

"Every man wants to achieve a certain level, moral and material. At heart, everyone wants to see himself a successful person, and to be seen by others that way".

(4) Self-identification by a set of criteria. Self-identification by one, even though "main" or "first" criterion, is rather relative — as a rule, the participants mentioned a few criteria for affiliation with the middle class or motives for their self-identification.

In such a case, in addition to income, possession of property and savings, the educational and/or cultural level, the most often mentioned were: the desire for continuous self-education, self-development and self-perfection — "is an obligatory attribute" (*Lviv-1*); a taste for a healthy way of life; the desire to maintain one's social status and to enable one's children to gain the same status; presence of "necessary" connections, especially those important for upgrading to a higher social stratum: "social standing, connections, [the ability] to come to terms at any level" (*Kyiv-1*).

Lviv-2

"For me, it's education, job, wellbeing. The possibility to give my children the best I can give: good education, to give them an opportunity to see the world... and to let them enjoy all those niceties".

Meanwhile, the majority of discussion participants noted that Ukrainian middle class missed such inherent and necessary status attributes as the feeling of stability of one's social standing and confidence in the future.

Lviv-2

"They abroad still have a standard set... and they live more or less confident in the future, while... we are always pressed by the lack of confidence in the future, so we seek to take more, not knowing what will happen tomorrow..."

At the end of discussion, the participants were supposed to categorise themselves in terms of social class or territorial parameters. All participants preferred territorial identification. Only one person chose to identify by social class: "I am a representative of the middle class, because wherever I go, it's all the same... I am in my social niche everywhere" (*Kyiv-2*).

MIDDLE CLASS: IDENTIFICATION CRITERIA AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS (BASED ON RESULTS OF THE PILOT STUDY)

Any social research on the middle class starts with addressing the issue of middle class identification criteria. The variety of approaches to defining these criteria relate to a variety of interpretations and understandings of what the middle class is. Furthermore, one major problem of studying middle class as a social community derives from the fact that “boundaries are rather conditional, and the integrity that comes from understanding oneself as a social class has not been formed”.¹

MIDDLE CLASS: THE ISSUE OF IDENTIFICATION CRITERIA

Russian sociologist German Diligenski divided social groups into empirical and analytical. According to him, the former “are naturally born from everyday social experience, and mark the phenomena which are easy to define empirically”. The latter “emerge as a result of conceptual and theoretical, ideological – or mythological – interpretation of reality, and serve as perception tools or analytical categories”.² He relates the concept of “workers” to the first category, and the middle class – to the second one.

From Diligenski’s point of view, self-identification should be the main identification criterion for an empirical social group. In the case of analytical groups, a key role goes to “objective” criteria, i.e. the characteristics, which a representative of this group should have, based on the ideas formed within a certain theoretical (or ideological) concept. However, the authors of this study assume that there are no “purely empirical” or “purely analytical” groups – each social group combines features of both groups; therefore, for the identification process of each group, both self-identification and “objective” criteria can be used.

One should also consider that social groups are dynamic and in continuous development. Indeed, there are grounds to assert that Ukrainian middle class, as a social community, is currently in transition from “analytical” to “empirical” stage. Therefore, its self-identification process as well as the recognition of common features, characteristics and shared interests by its representatives continue. Thus,

¹ Popova, I., Middle Strata, Middle Class in the Russian Society – on the Problem of Correlation. – Social Research, 2005, No.12, p.7.

² Diligenski, G., People of the Middle Class. – Moscow, 2002, p.7.

subjective perceptions of what middle class is (both in the society in general and among people who identify themselves with middle class) are becoming increasingly important for its identification.

As to the “objective” criteria for identification of individuals as representatives of the middle class, the problem that one may encounter is the fact that same indicators are rather difficult to interpret unambiguously for different groups and in different circumstances.

Indeed, such a common criterion for belonging to the middle class as *living in a separate house* is questionable in terms of using it in rural areas where living in a separate house is typical of most households. The problem of using the *level of income per family member* as a criterion is associated, for example, not only with the fact that in a city or village, families with same level of income may differ in terms of their level of wellbeing (because of different cost structures) but also with the complexity of obtaining objective information from the respondents – generally, respondents tend to underestimate their level of income. There are grounds to assume that the higher the respondent’s income is, the more significant the level of “underestimation” appears during the interview.

In other words, when using objective indicators, their number should be minimised, and, furthermore, they should be “universalised”, i.e. suitable for use for different territorial, settlement, and socio-demographic groups.

Furthermore, these indicators should be “technological” which means that, *firstly*, they should not be “labour intensive”, i.e. not require too much effort to obtain relevant information. For example, to assess the level of wellbeing, *self-assessment of the level of family wellbeing* by a respondent can be considered such a “technological” indicator (depending on the extent to which this wellbeing corresponds to the needs of a household – from food to luxuries).

However, since any self-assessment adds an element of subjectivity, the indicators obtained in this way can be considered “conditionally objective”. Of course, information about the respondents (their income and education level) obtained from them and based on their self-assessment, in most cases is less accurate than information received from documentary sources. However, it is obvious that in mass surveys, obtaining information on each respondent from documentary sources is practically an impossible task.

When defining the criteria for belonging to the middle class, it should be considered that it deals exactly with class rather than a set of middle strata. Here it is worth mentioning one important characteristic of social class – the presence of class consciousness and the sense of class solidarity, i.e. the awareness of proximity of one’s own interests to the interests of other people who belong to this class. According to John Goldthorpe, “Classes are groups of people united by common

interests”.³ To a large extent, this sense of solidarity turns a certain group of people into a community and a subject of social action. Thus, asking which social group a respondent feels he shares common interests with should be one of the criteria for identification with the middle class.

An individual may be considered to belong to a certain social group only if representatives of this community belong to his immediate social circle. Everyday communication itself creates in an individual a sense of empathy, common experience and perception of the world, and, therefore, the commonality of interests. Thus, as a criterion for identification with the middle class, indicators describing the social circle of a respondent can be used.

In the process of establishing the criteria for identification with the middle class, characteristics of the middle class as a collective actor and collective subject of social action with the criteria for identification of an individual with the middle class are often combined. Indeed, many researchers consider satisfaction with one's social position a criterion for identification with the middle class.⁴

However, a relatively high satisfaction with one's social status is rather a “statistical pattern” – indeed, representatives of the middle class are more often satisfied with their position than representatives of the lower class. However, there are grounds to argue that high satisfaction with one's position does not represent a mandatory requirement for identifying an individual with the middle class since satisfaction is an unstable characteristic, dependent on a particular social context. Thus, for example, if a government policy is aimed against the middle class and causes discontent of its representatives (including with their social position), it does not mean that under such circumstances they cease to belong to the middle class.

Formation of the identification criteria based on perceptions of social functions of the middle class is not well reasoned. Most often, middle class has been shown to play a crucial role in “stabilisation, integration, and development of the society; the bearer and guarantor of democratic and liberal values”.⁵ Largely influenced by these ideas, Alexander Chepurenski notes that “fundamental values, motivation for economic and social engagement, life strategies, and certain social functions” can be the criteria for identification with the middle class.⁶

However, the extent to which representatives of a social stratum, who identify with the middle class, are the bearers of innovative change and adherents of relevant social values should become *the subject of study rather than a criteria for*

³ Goldthorpe, J., Occupational Sociology, Yes: Class Analysis, No: Comment on Grusky and Weeden's Research Agenda. – Acta Sociologica, 2002, No.45 (3), p.211-216.

⁴ See: Simonchuk, E.V. Middle Class: People and Statuses. – Kyiv, 2003, p.48.

⁵ Diligenski, G.G. People of the Middle Class..., p.10.

⁶ Chepurenski, A.P. Middle Class in the Russian Society: Identification Criteria, Social Features. See: Middle Class in Contemporary Russian Society. – Moscow, 2000, p.10.

identification with the middle class. Moreover, as German Diligenski noted, “the heterogeneity of the middle class makes it difficult to establish common standards of mentality and behaviour ascribed to them”.⁷

A social group (as a collective subject of social action) performing any social functions does not provide for these functions to be performed by each representative of this social community individually, or for each of its representatives to have qualities, which enable him to perform these functions. In other words, characteristics of a social group cannot be transferred to each representative. By virtue of the fact that each social group is internally differentiated, contradictions may emerge – just like in the society as a whole – which are also the roots of its change and development.

In the process of formation of research tools, it is important to distinguish:

- components to be used as criteria for identification of the middle class (i.e. which will enable to identify a particular respondent as the middle class, or, on the contrary, to conclude that he cannot be categorised as that);
- components to be used to identify social characteristics of the middle class and compare them with characteristics of other social groups.

Selection of the identification criteria is also a subject of study. If the study is aimed at, for example, studying social engagement of a social group, its relations with other groups (i.e. any aspects of studying it as a social agent and subject of social action) more attention should be given to “subjective” criteria related to self-identification. In studies aimed at studying the position of a particular group in a society (financial situation, social standing, etc.), preference should be given to “objective” stratification criteria.

TESTING THE TOOLS (BASED ON RESULTS OF THE PILOT STUDY)

During the pilot testing of research tools used to identify the shortcomings, only a few dozens of respondents are usually interviewed. The pilot study carried out by the Razumkov Centre in July 2014 carries not only methodological value – since it was carried out of a representative sample of Ukrainians, but is also aimed at testing the suitability of the applied tools to achieve the aims and objectives of the study.⁸

⁷ Diligenski, G.G. *People of the Middle Class...*, p.10.

⁸ The study was held on 19-24 July 2014 in all the regions of Ukraine, except Crimea, for a representative sample for adult population of Ukraine by the key social and demographic indicators. 1010 respondents aged 18 and over were interviewed. Sampling error does not exceed 3.2%.

For the characteristics of other studies mentioned in this publication for comparison, please see the website of the Razumkov Centre <http://www.razumkov.org.ua/ukr/socpolls.php>.

Since the subject of research is primarily associated with studying social engagement of representatives of the middle class, during the results analysis, identification of the middle class, and comparison of social characteristics of representatives of the middle and lower classes, the preference was given to subjective criterion, namely the respondents' answers to a direct question *"Which class would you identify yourself with?"* with answer choices: 1 – upper, 2 – middle, 3 – lower. This question allows to distinguish the so-called "subjective middle class".⁹

Comparing the answers of representatives of the subjective middle class with answers of those who identified with lower class¹⁰ helps to understand how either this or that question can detect differences in social characteristics, and, therefore, whether it should be used.

The pilot study provides information on the basis of which one can conclude whether the wording of a particular indicator should be changed. Furthermore, the analysis of findings of the pilot study will reveal whether additional questions should be used in order to complement the criteria for identification of the middle class.

Indeed, during the analysis of answers to the question on what the respondents consider to be the main features of middle class, the dominance of indicators depicting the financial situation is clearly visible. 78% of respondents named *"stable income which provides for high standard of living and savings"*, 53% – *"comfortable accommodation"*, and 36% – *"a job that corresponds with qualification and is properly paid for"* (Table *"What are the main features of the middle class?"*).

However, as social studies have shown, when choosing from one list, the "financial" factors (income level, business activity, etc.) are always ranked higher than "non-financial" factors (i.e., personal qualities and characteristics). Thus, in such situations, the importance of "non-financial" factors is "underestimated".

When the "non-financial" and "financial" factors were "presented" as two separate lists, most respondents, when answering the question on personal qualities a person should possess to belong to the middle class, prioritised high level of education (68%) and culture (67%) (Tables *"Which of the following assets should a person own to be identified as middle class?"*, *"Which qualities and skills should a person possess to be identified as middle class?"*).

⁹ "Subjective middle class" is a term used to refer to people who identify themselves with this social stratum, regardless of the fact whether they meet the objective criteria of belonging to it. See: Khakhulina, L. Subjective Middle Class: Income, Financial Situation, Value Orientations. – *Economic and Social Change: Public Opinion Monitoring*, 1999, No.2, p.25.

¹⁰ Comparison to the representatives of the upper class was impossible due to an extremely low number of the respondents who identified themselves with this class.

Therefore, it seems appropriate to use questions where “financial” and “non-financial” aspects or characteristics of an activity will be presented as two separate lists.

Answers to questions aimed at identifying social aspirations and demands demonstrated that in many aspects representatives of the subjective middle class do not differ much from representatives of the lower class: the majority of them would like to own a comfortable accommodation, a country house (dacha), a car – by these indicators, their demands are almost identical to demands of the lower class (Chart “*Which ability in each pair of abilities would you prefer?*”). Therefore, this question should be omitted in the main study since it is not very informative for studying the characteristics of the middle class.

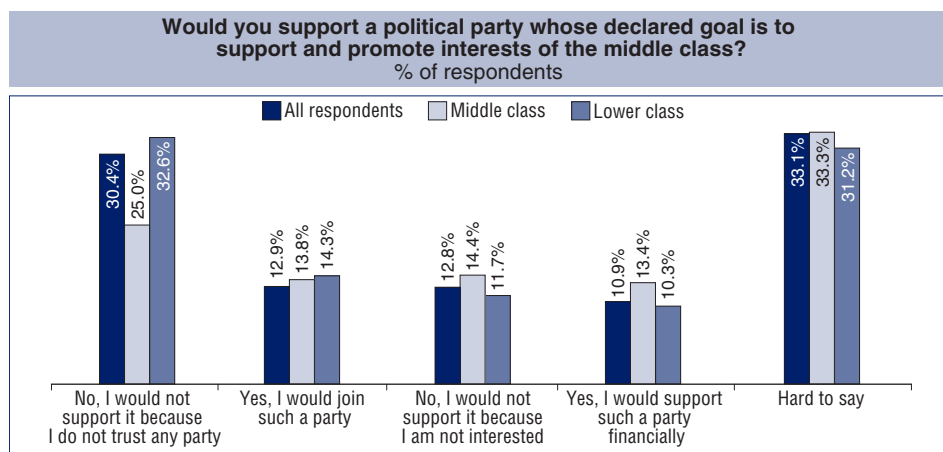
In contrast, the question on professional skills showed significant differences among those who identified themselves with middle class and those who consider themselves to be lower class (Chart “*Do you possess the following skills...?*”). Thus, this indicator should be used in the main study for comparative analysis of the middle and lower classes.

In general, the pilot study demonstrated that most indicators describing economic and social engagement of respondents (in particular, those presented in the Table “*What would you be likely to do if your income did not meet your family needs?*”) and the locus of control (the level of internality-externality) (Chart “*To what extent do you influence...?*”) should be applied.

According to the pilot study, both representatives of middle and lower classes expressed their willingness to support a political party whose declared goal is to support and promote interests of the middle class (Chart “*Would you support a political party whose declared goal is to support and promote interests of the middle class?*”). Thus, using the question that deals with political position and activity of the middle class does not make any sense.

It seems quite efficient to use questions describing the respondents’ perceptions of social justice, which demonstrate that subjective middle class in comparison to lower class is more likely to consider social inequality as fair, but if it is of a “meritocratic” nature, i.e. resulting from different set of skills, education, and work (Table “*Do you consider the following kinds of social inequality fair or unfair?*”).

Most questions dealing with satisfaction level of respondents allow to differentiate between representatives of the middle and lower classes (Charts “*Are you satisfied with your social standing?*”; “*Do you see any social prospects for yourself in Ukraine now?*”; “*What do you mostly feel...?*”).



However, the pilot study exposed poor wording of some questions in terms of achieving the aims and objectives of the study. A set of questions aimed at identifying the social environment of respondents did not ascertain the social standing of people belonging to their immediate social circles. Thus, for the main study, the wording will be changed.

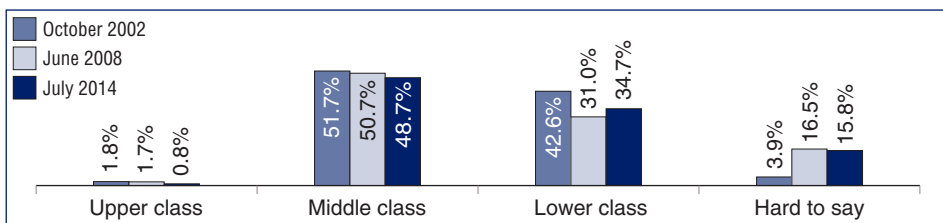
Therefore, the results of the pilot study helped identify questions to be included in the questionnaire, which will be used in the next sociological study, and specified questions which wording should be changed.

Based on findings of the pilot study as well as previous case studies conducted by the Razumkov Centre, the criteria for identification with the middle class to be used at the main stage of the study have been determined:

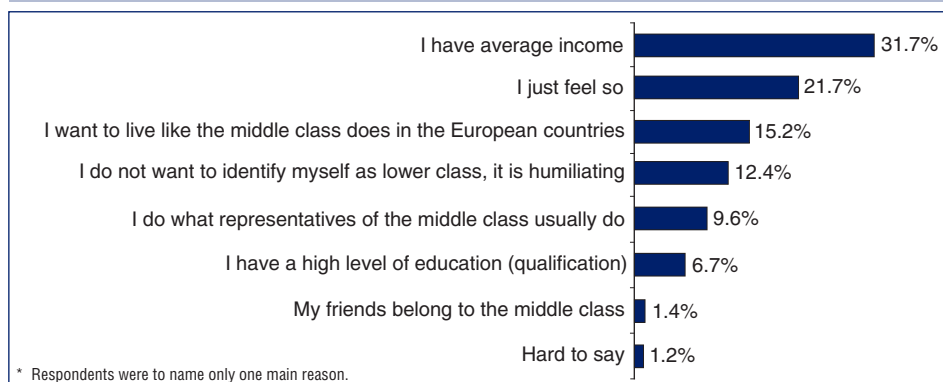
- respondent's self-identification as a representative of the middle class;
- self-reported level of material wellbeing (above the indicator of "overall, it is enough for a living");
- the level of education (above vocational training or undergraduate degree);
- a commonality of interests with representatives of the middle class;
- prevalence of middle class representatives in their immediate social environment.

MIDDLE CLASS: IDENTIFICATION AND SELF-IDENTIFICATION CRITERIA

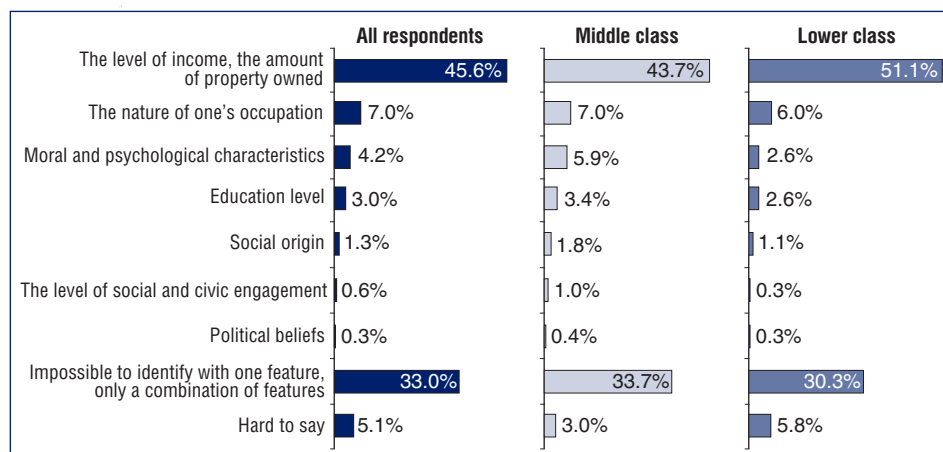
If the Ukrainian society is divided into three social classes, which class would you identify yourself with?
% of respondents



Why do you identify yourself as middle class?*
% of those who identified themselves as middle class



What are the main features to identify a person as middle class?
% of respondents



Which of the following are the main features of the middle class?*
% of respondents

	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Stable income which provides for a high standard of living as well as savings	79.7	77.8	85.1
Comfortable accommodation	53.2	51.4	57.1
A job that corresponds with qualification and is properly paid for	36.1	37.8	33.7
A car	24.2	22.8	26.9
High level of education	19.1	19.3	18.9
High cultural level	19.0	21.5	17.4
Striving for wellbeing through one's own work	18.9	22.0	15.4
Durables (home appliances, furniture, etc.)	18.6	18.5	21.4
Ability to enjoy a holiday, including abroad	16.4	18.3	16.0
Self-confidence and self-reliance, counting on oneself, not on the state social benefits	15.4	16.9	13.7
Availability of innovative communication and work equipment (computer, the Internet, etc.)	15.0	14.6	15.4
Savings (deposits in banks; ownership of securities; real estate that brings income)	15.0	11.0	19.4
Own business	14.5	14.8	15.7
Ability to use paid medical and health services for the whole family	13.3	12.2	16.0
Self-esteem and dignity	12.4	15.0	7.7
Willingness to provide good education for children (grandchildren), teach them to live a healthy lifestyle, and continually improve their educational and cultural level	12.4	13.0	12.0
Striving for professional fulfilment, continuous self-education, self-improvement, training	11.4	11.4	10.3
Being law-abiding	9.2	9.6	9.4
Insurance policies (health, retirement, life insurance)	8.5	9.8	8.6
Ability to use paid educational services for the whole family	7.2	7.5	8.0
Being a white-collar worker (intellectual, manager, etc)	6.9	7.3	4.6
Rational needs, no striving for luxury or demonstration of one's superiority to others	6.1	5.5	6.3
A country house (<i>dacha</i>)	5.7	4.3	6.6
Healthy lifestyle	5.5	6.9	3.4
Having free time	4.8	5.9	4.0
Tolerance, respect for others	4.1	4.5	4.0
Commitment to democratic values and willingness to defend them, including from brutality of the authorities	3.4	3.3	2.9
Civic engagement	3.1	3.7	1.7
Readiness for change (permanent residence, employment, occupation, etc)	2.0	2.6	1.4
Using loans (for housing, car, etc)	1.5	1.2	2.0
Other	0.1	0.0	0.0
Hard to say	1.8	0.2	1.7

* Respondents were offered to choose up to five acceptable answers.

Which of the following assets should a person own to be identified as middle class?*			
	% of respondents		
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Stable income which provides for high standard of living as well as savings	82.7	78.7	88.3
Comfortable accommodation	75.9	73.8	78.0
Ability to enjoy a holiday, including abroad	66.3	64.4	65.7
Durables (home appliances, furniture, etc.)	65.3	63.4	64.3
A job which corresponds with qualification and is properly paid for	64.7	63.0	67.4
Ability to use paid medical and health services for the whole family	63.7	59.3	69.4
A car	63.4	58.1	69.1
Innovative communication and work equipment (computer, the Internet, etc.)	60.6	57.5	63.1
Ability to use paid educational services for the whole family	56.5	49.8	63.1
Savings (deposits in banks; ownership of securities; real estate that brings income)	54.7	47.4	61.1
Insurance policies (health, retirement, life insurance)	49.3	44.7	51.1
Own business	41.5	34.6	45.7
A country house (<i>dacha</i>)	40.3	33.9	42.6
Free time	37.2	37.0	32.9
Ability to use loans (for housing, car, etc.)	24.4	21.3	21.7

* Respondents were asked to choose all the acceptable answers.

Which qualities and skills should a person possess to be identified as middle class?*			
	% of respondents		
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
High level of education	68.4	64.8	69.7
High cultural level	67.1	64.8	65.7
Striving for welfare through one's own work	65.1	61.2	66.0
Willingness to provide good education for children (grandchildren), teach them to live a healthy lifestyle and continually improve their educational and cultural level	61.9	61.2	60.9
Self-confidence and self-reliance, counting on oneself, not on the state social benefits	61.4	55.9	65.4
Striving for professional fulfilment, continuous self-education, self-improvement, training	59.9	54.7	62.0
Self-esteem and dignity	57.9	55.9	57.4
Being law-abiding	57.5	52.8	58.0
Tolerance, respect for others	50.4	47.8	50.0
Healthy lifestyle	47.9	45.3	48.3
Being a white-collar worker (intellectual, manager, etc.)	46.8	46.1	41.4
Commitment to democratic values and willingness to defend them, including from brutality of the authorities	40.9	38.0	41.1
Civic engagement	39.7	36.2	40.3
Rational needs, no striving for luxury or demonstration of one's superiority to others	36.1	31.5	36.6
Readiness for change (permanent residence, employment, occupation, etc.)	28.3	27.0	24.6

* Respondents were asked to choose all the acceptable answers.

Which of the following do you have?*
% of respondents

	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Durables (home appliances, furniture, etc.)	84.9	89.8	82.0
Comfortable accommodation	57.2	67.3	46.3
Innovative communication and work equipment (computer, the Internet, etc.)	52.3	69.5	27.4
Free time	51.8	50.4	57.7
A car	28.6	39.6	13.4
A job that corresponds with qualification and is properly paid for	25.2	35.4	9.1
Stable income that provides for a high standard of living as well as savings	15.1	23.0	4.0
A country house (<i>dacha</i>)	15.1	20.7	8.9
Ability to use paid medical and health services for the whole family	13.7	19.9	6.6
Ability to use paid educational services for the whole family	11.5	18.5	1.7
Savings (deposits in banks; ownership of securities; real estate that brings income)	10.4	14.2	3.7
Ability to use loans (for housing, car, etc.)	7.8	9.6	5.4
Ability to enjoy a holiday, including abroad	7.7	13.2	1.1
Insurance policies (health, retirement, life insurance)	7.5	11.0	2.9
Own business	4.5	6.3	0.6

* Respondents were asked to choose all the acceptable answers.

Which of the following do you need?*
% of respondents

	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Stable income which provides for a high standard of living as well as savings	71.0	63.2	78.3
Ability to enjoy a holiday, including abroad	63.8	64.4	59.1
Ability to use paid medical and health services for the whole family	56.8	52.2	63.7
Savings (deposits in banks; ownership of securities; real estate that brings income)	54.2	51.0	56.3
Insurance policies (health, retirement, life insurance)	43.5	41.9	43.1
A job that corresponds with qualification and is properly paid for	42.7	37.0	46.6
A car	42.0	37.2	44.3
Ability to use paid educational services for the whole family	41.9	37.4	46.3
Own business	34.9	39.8	23.1
Comfortable accommodation	34.6	26.2	42.6
A country house (<i>dacha</i>)	32.7	30.5	29.7
Having free time	22.7	25.2	14.9
Using loans (for housing, car, etc.)	19.8	16.5	17.1
Availability of innovative communication and work equipment (computer, the Internet, etc.)	16.4	8.9	24.3
Durables (home appliances, furniture, etc.)	7.8	3.3	11.4

* Respondents were asked to mark off all the acceptable answers.

Which qualities do you possess?*			
	% of respondents		
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Law-abiding	79.3	77.2	80.6
Self-esteem and dignity	74.5	74.2	72.0
Tolerance, respect for others	69.3	67.5	72.0
Striving for welfare through own work	61.5	66.9	50.6
Healthy lifestyle	58.5	62.8	51.4
Self-confidence and self-reliance, counting on oneself, not on the state social benefits	51.1	58.9	37.7
High cultural level	42.7	50.6	29.4
Rational needs, no striving for luxury or demonstration of one's superiority to others	39.9	38.8	40.3
Striving for professional fulfilment, continuous self-education, self-improvement, training	35.7	42.5	19.7
Willingness to provide good education for children (grandchildren), teach them to live a healthy lifestyle, and continually improve their educational and cultural level	34.4	38.4	26.9
High level of education	31.8	44.7	15.1
Being a white-collar worker (intellectual, manager, etc.)	29.0	42.7	9.7
Commitment to democratic values and willingness to defend them, including from brutality of the authorities	27.0	27.0	22.0
Civic engagement	22.8	24.6	16.6
Readiness for change (permanent residence, employment, occupation, etc.)	16.2	18.1	11.4

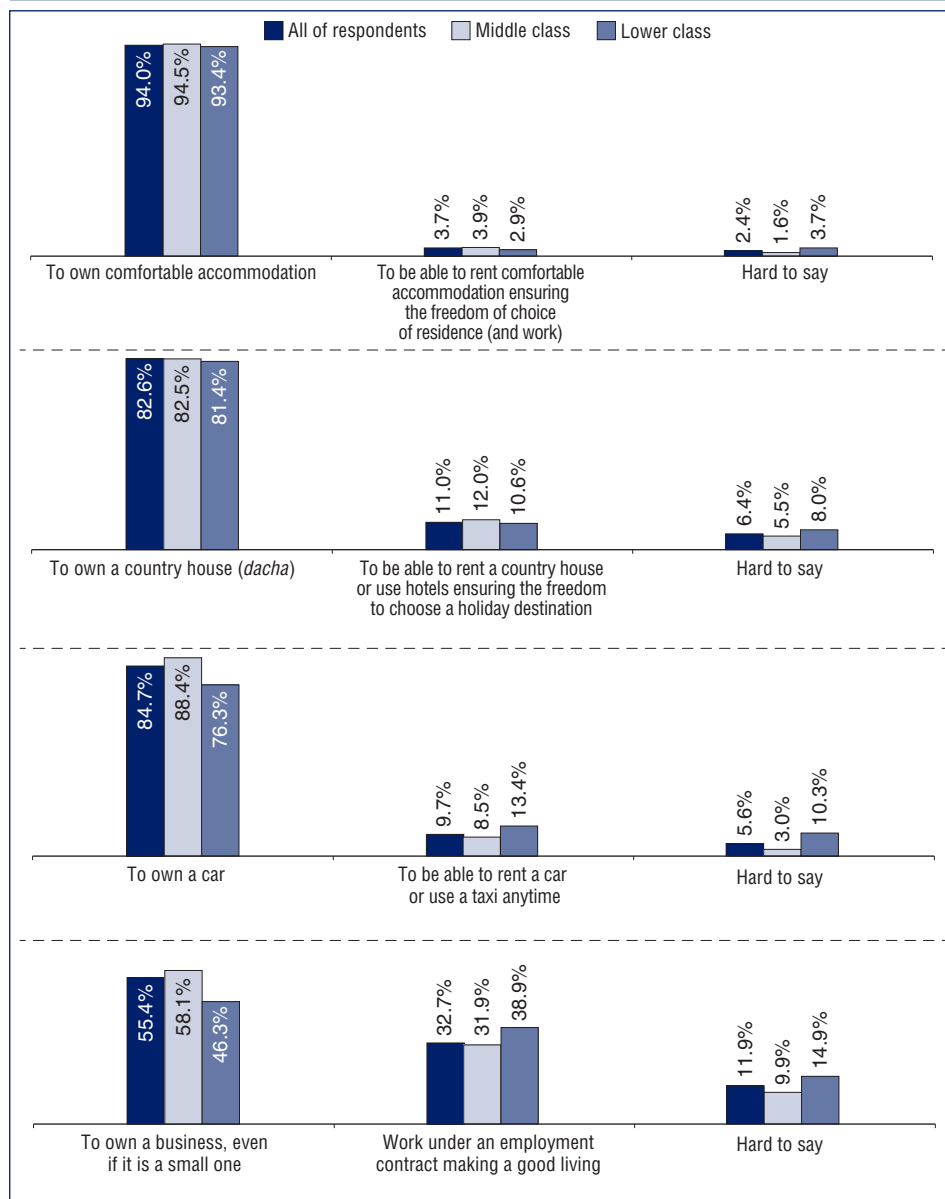
* Respondents were asked to choose up to five acceptable answers.

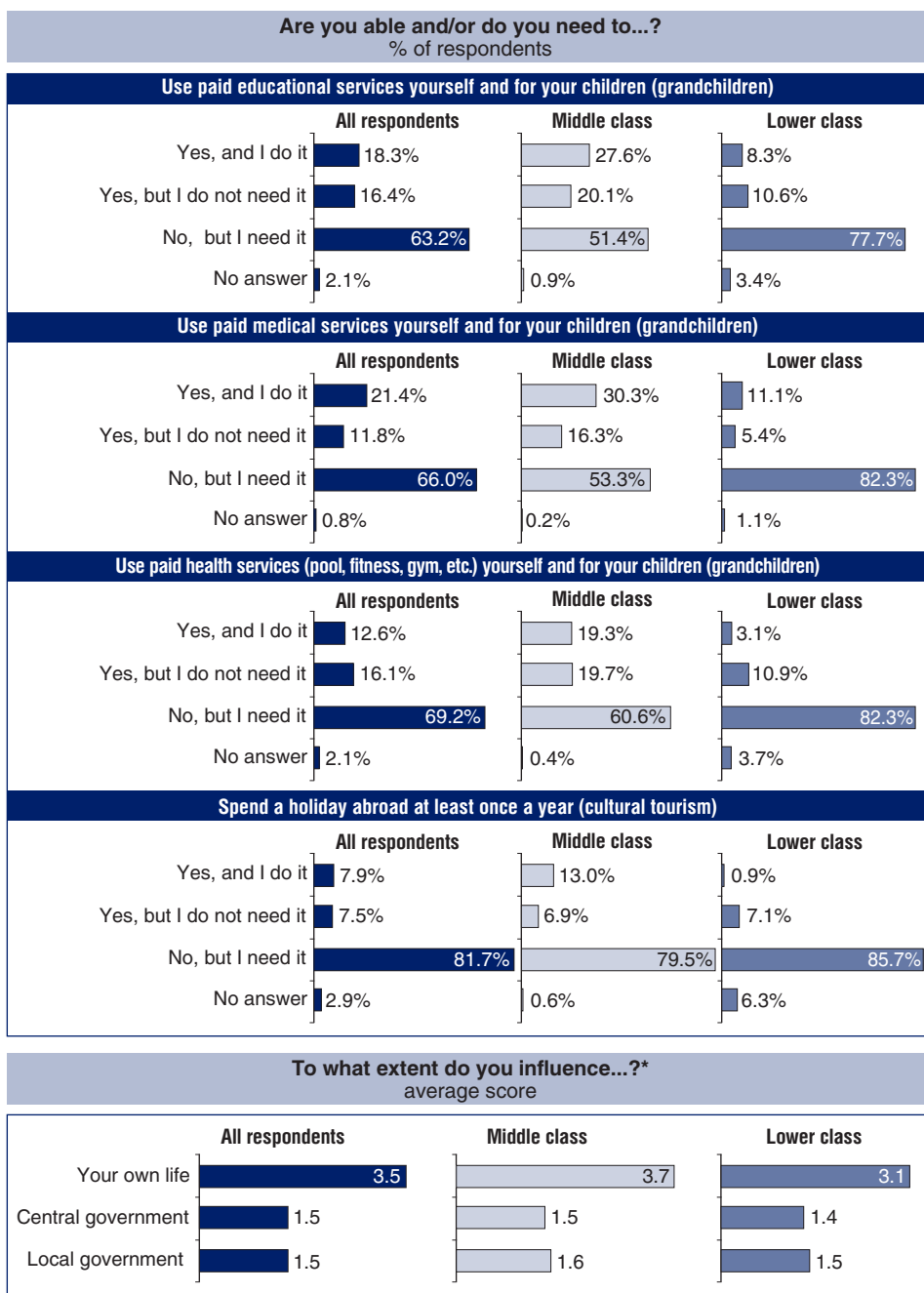
Which qualities do you lack?*			
	% of respondents		
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Willingness to provide good education for children (grandchildren), teach them to live a healthy lifestyle, and continually improve their educational and cultural level	37.8	36.8	41.4
High level of education	29.6	28.5	30.0
Self-confidence and self-reliance, counting on oneself, and not on state social benefits	22.9	18.3	29.7
Striving for professional fulfilment, continuous self-education, self-improvement, training	22.3	23.0	21.7
Being a white-collar worker (intellectual, manager, etc.)	20.4	18.5	19.1
High cultural level	19.4	19.7	20.3
Civic engagement	19.4	18.7	19.1
Readiness for change (permanent residence, employment, occupation, etc.)	18.2	17.9	0.0
Striving for welfare through one's own work	17.5	15.0	20.9
Healthy lifestyle	16.5	14.4	20.6
Commitment to democratic values and willingness to defend them, including from brutality of the authorities	15.2	15.7	14.6
Rational needs, no striving for luxury or demonstration of one's superiority to others	8.7	7.9	7.4
Tolerance, respect for others	5.6	5.5	4.6
Self esteem and dignity	5.3	5.1	6.9
Law-abiding	3.5	2.8	2.6

* Respondents were asked to choose up to five acceptable answers.

MIDDLE CLASS BY SELF-IDENTIFICATION: ABILITIES, SKILLS, SAVINGS

Which ability in each pair of abilities would you prefer?
% of respondents

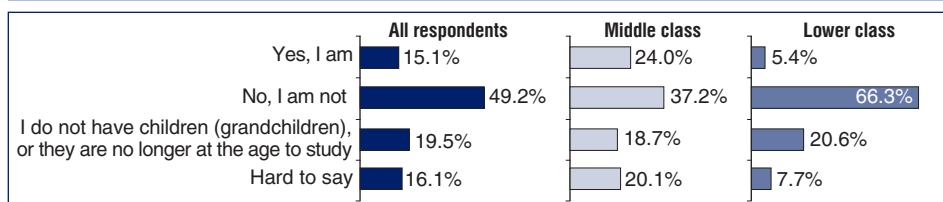




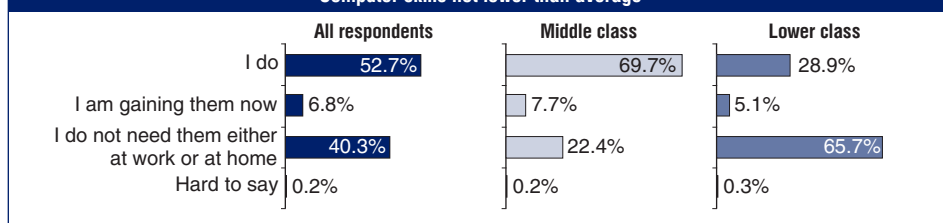
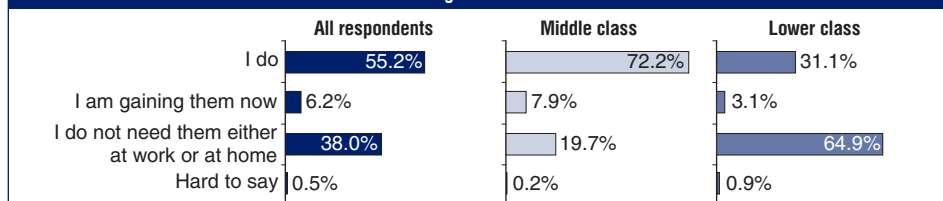
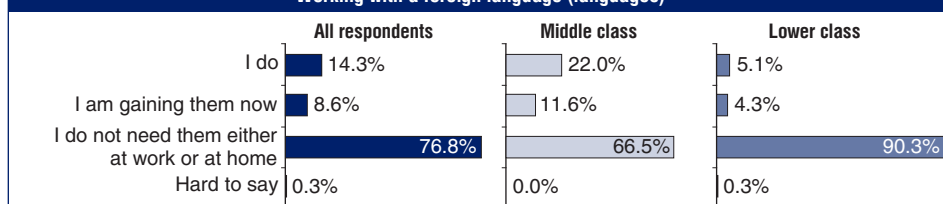
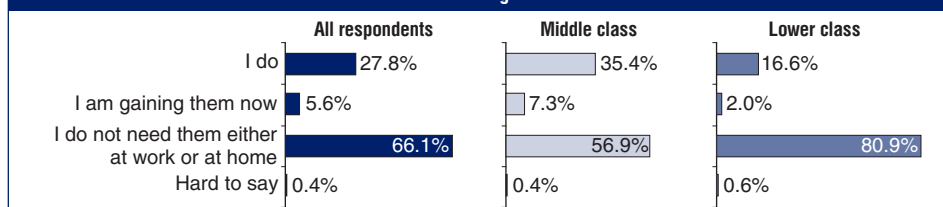
* On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is no influence at all and 5 is strong influence.

Are you able to provide good education for your children or grandchildren?

% of respondents

**Do you possess the following skills...?**

% of respondents

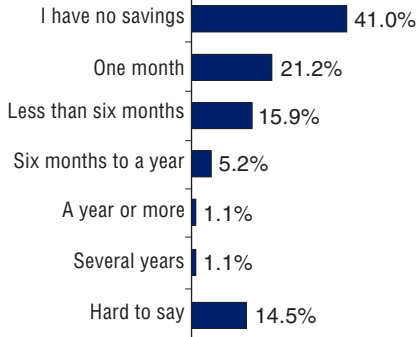
Computer skills not lower than average**Using the Internet****Working with a foreign language (languages)****Driving**

Which of the following achievements over the last 10 years can you name? % of respondents			
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Made expensive purchases (furniture, home appliances, etc.)	28.1	37.4	16.3
Improved living conditions	21.5	26.6	16.3
Improved education, qualification, mastered another occupation	20.5	26.8	9.4
Improved the standard of living financially	20.5	29.3	9.7
Bought a car	13.4	17.9	8.0
Changed jobs or got a promotion	12.3	15.7	6.9
Went abroad	7.8	12.2	0.9
Moved (to another city, region, or <i>oblast</i>)	5.4	7.1	4.3
Learned a foreign language	3.8	5.5	1.1
Started a business	2.7	4.3	0.0
Other	12.5	5.7	23.4
Hard to say	23.5	15.7	32.3

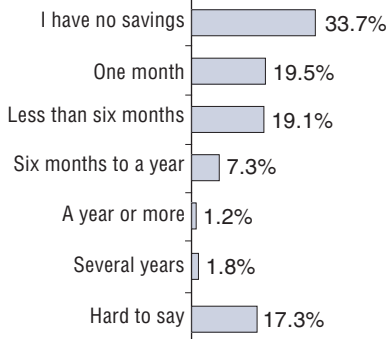
What would you be likely to do if your income did not meet the needs of your family? % of respondents			
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Look for an extra job	28.7	33.9	22.3
Reduce the needs	23.2	23.2	25.1
Look for another job	12.9	14.2	9.4
Apply for state assistance	5.5	2.6	11.7
Demand a pay raise from your management	3.4	3.5	3.7
Start your own business	3.3	3.7	2.6
Resort to political forms of protest	1.7	1.4	1.4
Emigrate	1.2	1.8	0.6
Earn money by breaking the law	0.8	0.8	0.6
Hard to say	19.4	14.8	22.6

**If you lose the source of income,
how long can you live off your savings?**
% of respondents

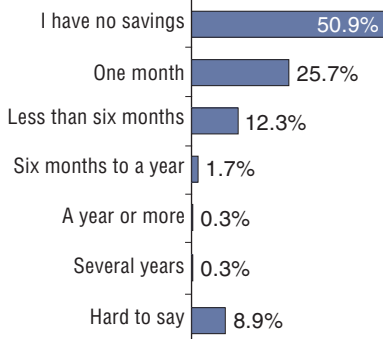
All respondents



Middle class

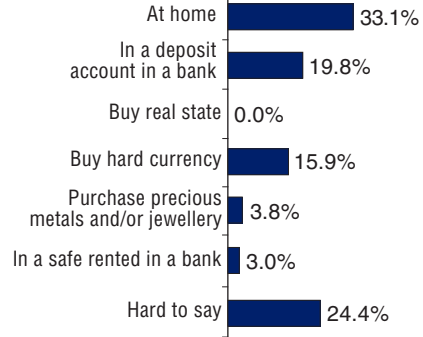


Lower class

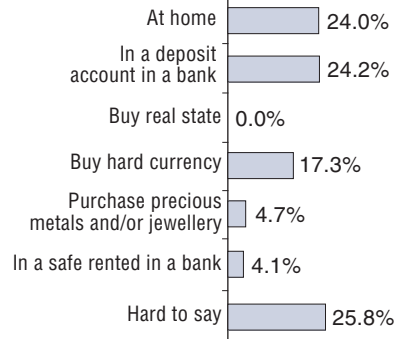


**What is the most profitable
and safe way to keep savings?**
% of respondents

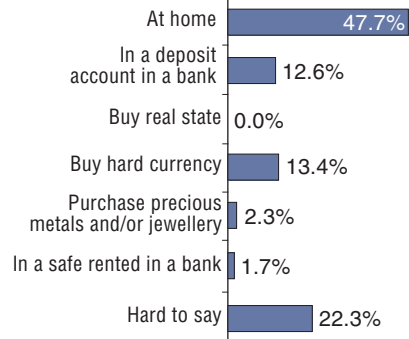
All respondents



Middle class



Lower class



MIDDLE CLASS BY SELF-IDENTIFICATION: TOLERANCE AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS OTHERS

How would you feel if, for example, as a result of your or your children's (grandchildren's) marriage, [...] joined your family?
% of respondents

A representative of the upper class

	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Positively	55.7	57.7	49.7
Negatively	5.0	3.7	6.6
Indifferent	29.0	29.7	30.9
Hard to say	10.3	8.9	12.9

A representative of the middle class

	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Positively	65.4	66.5	62.9
Negatively	0.5	0.0	0.6
Indifferent	28.3	28.7	29.7
Hard to say	5.7	4.8	6.9

A representative of the lower class

	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Positively	24.3	22.4	28.3
Negatively	20.2	21.5	17.4
Indifferent	34.7	36.0	36.6
Hard to say	20.9	20.1	17.7

A bearer of another culture

	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Positively	21.4	19.7	20.9
Negatively	17.6	15.7	21.4
Indifferent	37.3	42.5	33.4
Hard to say	23.7	22.2	24.3

A supporter of another church or religion

	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Positively	12.1	13.0	12.3
Negatively	25.0	24.4	26.9
Indifferent	37.9	38.0	36.3
Hard to say	25.0	24.6	24.6

A speaker of another language

	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Positively	20.5	20.3	18.6
Negatively	16.4	12.8	22.6
Indifferent	44.4	50.8	37.1
Hard to say	18.7	16.1	21.7

A citizen of another country

	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Positively	25.5	25.0	23.7
Negatively	12.9	8.1	19.1
Indifferent	41.0	47.2	34.9
Hard to say	20.6	19.7	22.3

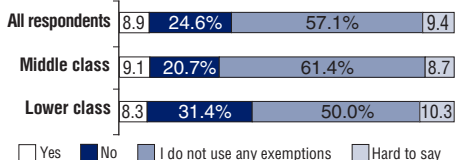
A city dweller

	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Positively	50.0	47.6	52.3
Negatively	0.2	0.4	0.0
Indifferent	43.8	45.9	42.0
Hard to say	6.0	6.1	5.7

A villager

	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Positively	36.7	32.9	41.4
Negatively	6.1	6.9	4.3
Indifferent	47.3	49.4	45.7
Hard to say	9.8	10.8	8.6

Are you willing to give up part of the exemptions you currently use (subsidies, free public transport, social benefits, etc.) for the sake of social justice?
% of respondents



Do you consider the following kinds of social inequality fair or unfair?
% of respondents

Inequality in living conditions, depending on financial capability

	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Fair	37.3	43.7	29.7
Unfair	49.3	44.1	55.7
Hard to say	13.4	12.2	14.6

Varying quality of education, depending on the financial capability of parents

	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Fair	11.3	14.6	7.4
Unfair	82.1	78.0	88.0
Hard to say	6.6	7.3	4.6

Varying quality of healthcare, depending on financial capability

	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Fair	7.5	9.3	6.6
Unfair	85.8	83.7	88.0
Hard to say	6.6	6.9	5.4

Unequal pay, depending on the nature of work, the degree of responsibility at work, and the need for higher education

	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Fair	59.2	63.6	56.0
Unfair	31.7	27.8	36.0
Hard to say	9.1	8.5	8.0

Unequal pensions, depending on the nature of work and work experience

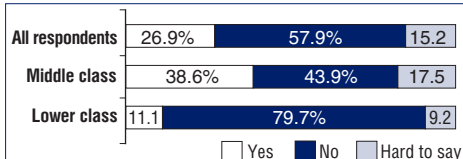
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Fair	56.8	62.2	50.9
Unfair	34.3	28.3	42.3
Hard to say	8.9	9.6	6.9

Unequal pension, depending on the status of a civil servant, a deputy, etc.

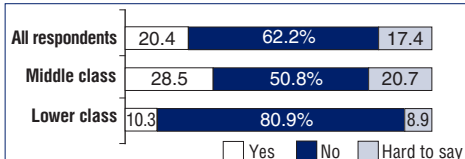
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Fair	14.5	15.9	8.3
Unfair	73.1	70.3	81.4
Hard to say	12.5	13.8	10.3

MIDDLE CLASS BY SELF-IDENTIFICATION: LIFE AND SOCIAL STATUS SATISFACTION, APPROACH TO SOCIAL PROSPECTS

**Are you satisfied
with your social standing?**
% of respondents



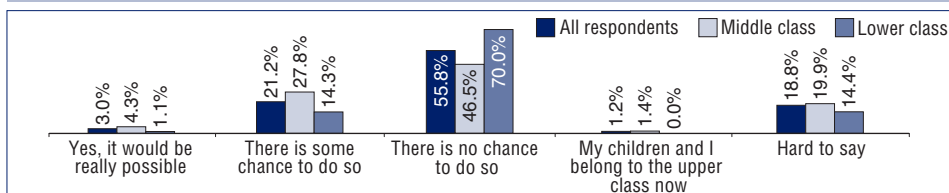
**Do you see any social prospects
for yourself in Ukraine now?**
% of respondents



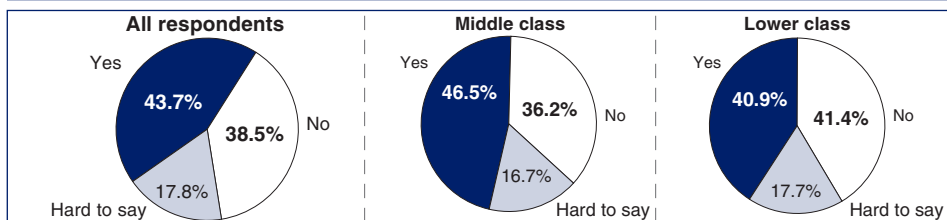
What do you mostly feel when you think about your life?
% of respondents

	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Hope that life will gradually get better	27.2	35.0	18.3
The feeling of fear of the future	15.5	13.2	21.4
Anxiety, the sinking feeling of decline and unwelcome changes	13.7	8.9	15.7
The feeling that life is going OK	6.1	7.9	3.1
I do not think much about my life, I go with the flow	5.0	4.9	5.4
Dissatisfaction with life	4.7	4.3	6.6
Irritation that I am not happy about life now	4.4	4.1	4.9
The feeling of self-confidence	3.9	6.1	0.9
I feel happy	3.4	4.9	1.1
The feeling of the lack of choice	2.8	1.8	4.6
The feeling of lost opportunities and unfulfilled hopes	2.3	1.6	4.0
The feeling of hopelessness	2.3	1.0	4.6
Tired of life	1.9	0.6	3.4
The feeling that life is unfair to me	1.1	0.4	1.7
Life lived in vain	0.4	0.2	0.9
Envy of happier people	0.1	0.0	0.3
Hard to say	5.4	5.2	3.1

**If you wanted to join the upper class of society,
would it be really possible for you or your children to do so?**
% of respondents



Would you want your children to live and work abroad?
% of respondents



MIDDLE CLASS BY SELF-IDENTIFICATION: LEISURE

How often do you do the following?
% of respondents

Read fiction			
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Never	25.6	16.3	37.4
Several times a year	33.6	32.9	32.6
Once or twice a month	17.8	20.3	16.0
At least once a week	14.1	18.9	7.7
Almost everyday	8.9	11.6	6.3
No answer	0.0	0.0	0.0
Read professional literature			
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Never	37.6	28.3	53.4
Several times a year	20.9	20.1	19.1
Once or twice a month	18.0	20.5	12.9
At least once a week	16.5	21.1	11.7
Almost everyday	6.9	10.0	2.9
No answer	0.0	0.0	0.0
Listen to music			
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Never	9.9	6.1	18.0
Several times a year	5.6	4.7	6.3
Once or twice a month	11.7	12.6	11.1
At least once a week	25.2	24.4	26.9
Almost everyday	47.4	52.2	37.7
No answer	0.1	0.0	0.0
Play musical instruments			
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Never	87.4	84.6	92.3
Several times a year	6.0	7.3	4.9
Once or twice a month	2.4	3.7	0.9
At least once a week	2.4	2.6	0.9
Almost everyday	1.5	1.6	0.9
No answer	0.3	0.2	0.3
Watch sports			
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Never	37.2	31.9	48.9
Several times a year	18.1	19.5	14.6
Once or twice a month	20.8	21.3	18.0
At least once a week	17.0	19.5	13.4
Almost everyday	6.3	7.3	4.6
No answer	0.5	0.4	0.6
Do sports			
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Never	62.0	50.8	77.1
Several times a year	11.5	13.4	8.6
Once or twice a month	8.6	11.2	5.4
At least once a week	10.7	14.2	6.0
Almost everyday	6.8	10.0	2.3
No answer	0.4	0.4	0.6
Visit museums and galleries			
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Never	69.9	59.3	84.9
Several times a year	25.6	33.5	14.0
Once or twice a month	3.7	5.7	0.9
At least once a week	0.6	0.8	0.0
Almost everyday	0.1	0.2	0.0
No answer	0.4	0.4	0.3

Go to the theatre			
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Never	73.7	64.0	87.1
Several times a year	23.1	30.7	12.3
Once or twice a month	3.0	4.7	0.6
At least once a week	0.1	0.2	0.0
Almost everyday	0.1	0.2	0.0
No answer	0.1	0.2	0.0
Go to the cinema			
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Never	66.3	54.3	83.7
Several times a year	25.2	33.9	13.4
Once or twice a month	7.3	10.2	2.0
At least once a week	0.9	1.2	0.9
Almost everyday	0.1	0.2	0.0
No answer	0.1	0.2	0.0
Go clubbing, etc.			
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Never	79.8	72.4	92.0
Several times a year	11.8	16.3	4.3
Once or twice a month	6.5	8.7	2.9
At least once a week	1.3	1.8	0.6
Almost everyday	0.2	0.4	0.0
No answer	0.4	0.4	0.3
Visit friends and host parties			
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Never	5.6	2.6	9.1
Several times a year	26.2	18.5	36.0
Once or twice a month	45.9	50.6	40.3
At least once a week	20.2	25.2	13.7
Almost everyday	1.7	2.8	0.3
No answer	0.3	0.2	0.6
Spend free time outdoors			
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Never	7.8	4.3	13.7
Several times a year	23.7	18.7	29.1
Once or twice a month	33.4	39.2	23.4
At least once a week	17.7	23.4	12.0
Almost everyday	16.7	14.0	20.6
No answer	0.7	0.4	1.1
Spend free time shopping, etc.			
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Never	7.2	5.5	10.3
Several times a year	10.4	9.3	12.0
Once or twice a month	29.9	31.1	27.7
At least once a week	41.2	38.4	41.7
Almost everyday	11.1	15.4	8.3
No answer	0.2	0.2	0.0
Go outside your locality			
	All respondents	Middle class	Lower class
Never	13.1	8.1	22.6
Several times a year	33.6	31.7	33.7
Once or twice a month	29.5	32.5	26.0
At least once a week	16.8	18.3	13.4
Almost everyday	6.7	8.9	4.3
No answer	0.3	0.4	0.0