

CRIMEA IN THE PUBLIC OPINION OF UKRAINIANS

A nationwide public opinion poll of Ukrainians was jointly conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Razumkov Center sociological service on August 16-22, 2018 in all regions of Ukraine, excluding the Ukrainian territory of Crimea occupied by Russia and the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. 2,019 respondents aged 18 years and older were polled. The theoretical sample error doesn't exceed 2.3%.

For comparison, findings from a previous nationwide survey conducted jointly by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Razumkov Center sociological service on May 11-16, 2016 were included.

The survey was conducted with the financial support of the MATRA project of the Embassy of the Netherlands in Ukraine.

A prevalent majority (69%) of Ukraine's population believes that *the Crimea should be a part of Ukraine*, and this percentage remains unchanged in comparison to May 2016. Twelve percent support the existence of the Crimea as a de-facto independent state (with as many as in 2016), and 4% recognize it as belonging to Russia (7% in 2016). *Regional differences* exist regarding the question of Crimea's status: 80% of those polled in the western and central regions say that the Crimea should belong to Ukraine; 56% in the south, and 45% in the east. Concurrently, an absolute minority of respondents in the south and east support the Crimea belonging to Russia – 3% in the south and 10% in the east. However, a certain part of the population in these regions believes that the Crimea should be independent (24% in the south, and 18% in the east).

A majority of the Ukrainian population believes that it is an unacceptable offer to “trade” the Crimea for Donbas. That is, to recognize Russia's annexation of Crimea “in exchange for” Russia to withdraw from the occupied territories of the Donbas (only 16% support this “tradeoff”). The most who are categorically against this option for peacemaking are in the west (81%) and in the center (77%). Residents in the east (41%) and south (56%) are also mainly against this version, although in these regions a certain portion of residents agree that they “must agree with any proposal that will lead to peace, even at the expense of the Crimea” (23% in the south, and 18% in the east).

Optimistic assessments of the prospect for Ukraine to regain control over the Crimea *exceeded pessimistic valuations*: 48% of Ukrainian citizens believe this reversion is realistic, 36% don't believe in this possibility. At the same time, only 5% believe that this reversion is possible in the near future (in May 2016, such optimists stood at 22%). The undecided level of opinion somewhat rose on this issue (from 8% to 17%).

The preponderance of optimistic expectations about the possibility of returning Crimea is formed mainly by residents of the west and the center (among whom are respectively, 65% and 54%, who believe the return of the Crimea is realistic), whereas among residents of the south and east, inversely, *opinions about the unlikelihood or impossibility* of such developments prevail (in both regions, 51% of those polled voiced a pessimistic opinion).

At the same time, only a minority of the population (34%) is for restoring financial subsidies for the Crimea from the state budget should it return to Ukraine; substantially more (49%) don't support this measure. Even among those respondents who were in favor of restoring Crimea belonging to Ukraine, the agreement level to finance the cost of maintaining the Crimea was less than half of those polled (43%), whereas 41% of respondents don't support such expenses. Moreover, in comparison with May 2016, the *level of consent for subsidized support of the Crimea has dropped (by 7%)* and the level of disagreement slightly increased (by 6%).

Personal readiness to financially support certain programs aimed at integrating the Crimea to Ukraine were voiced by 22% of citizens; the most in the western regions (29%), the least in the southern (10%).

Respondents who believe that it is realistic for Ukraine to regain control over the Crimea named the following conducive factors most frequently: *a change of power in Russia* (39%), *imposing tighter sanctions on Russia* (32%) and *raising the standard of living in Ukraine* (31%). These top three factors

remain unchanged in comparison to May 2016. Only the hope for a change in power in Russia slightly rose and the impact of raising standard of living in Ukraine fell. Only 10% of the population support the forcible return of the Crimea to Ukraine. Moreover, this share slightly decreased (from 14%) in comparison to May 2016.

The idea of the possibility to return Crimea back into the fold of Ukraine differs among residents regionally. In particular, the hope for a change of power in Russia is most prevalent among respondents in the west (41%) and center (45%), whereas in the other regions, significantly less hope is found: 22% in the south and 28% in the east. However, the most prevalent opinion (54%) among residents of the south is the significance of improving prosperity in Ukraine. Residents in the western region (42%) place more hope in imposing tighter sanctions, whereas in other regions this option is chosen substantially less frequently (30% in the center, 24% in the east and 17% in the south).

Half of Ukrainian citizens support the idea of creating Crimean-Tatar autonomy inside the Crimea, in case of de-occupation of the peninsula; while 28% don't support this prospect. The biggest support for Crimean-Tatar autonomy in the Crimea is found in the western region (56%) and the center (59%), whereas in the south and east 36-38% approve of this idea (the level of disagreement with the idea in these regions is approximately the same).

A significant part of the population (41%) is for simplifying the most the entry/exit procedure to and from the Crimea for Ukrainian citizens, including for Crimean residents; 30% of those surveyed completely accept the current entry/exit regime, and 11% call for a stricter system so that entry/exit permission to and from the Crimea is provided only with special permits and justified reason. Residents of the western regions foremost support the demand for a stricter crossing procedure system at the line of separation with occupied Crimea (26%), and liberalization of the system is supported by the majority of residents of the south (51%) and the east (50%) of Ukraine.

SURVEY FINDINGS

In your opinion, should the Crimea be a part of Russia, Ukraine, or would it be better for it to become an independent de-facto state (like Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria)?

	<i>May 2016</i>	<i>August 2018</i>
The Crimea should be a part of Russia	7.2	4.4
The Crimea should be a part of Ukraine	68.6	68.9
The Crimea should be an independent state construct	12.4	12.5
Difficult to say	11.8	14.2

In your opinion, is it possible to return the territory of Crimea back into the fold of Ukraine in the future?

	<i>May 2016</i>	<i>August 2018</i>
Yes, and in the near future	22.3	5.4
Most likely yes, it's possible but in the long-term future	32.1	42.3
It's likely not possible already	24.2	20.1
No, absolutely impossible. Ukraine has lost the Crimea forever	13.3	15.5
Difficult to say	8.1	16.7

If you believe that it's possible to return the Crimea, then in which way (under what circumstances) is the restoration of Ukraine's sovereignty over the territory of the Crimea possible?* (*% of those who believe that the Crimea can be returned*)

	<i>May 2016</i>	<i>August 2018</i>
Should a change in power (president) in the Russian Federation occur	32.3	38.8
Should tighter sanctions be imposed on the RF by the international community that would force the RF to return the Crimea to Ukraine	33.6	31.6
Should reforms be enacted and overall living standards improve in Ukraine, which would attract residents of the Crimea	35.2	31.0
Should the current sanctions regime and pressure by the international community be preserved that would force the RF to return the peninsula to Ukraine	14.9	15.9
The Crimea will on its own return to Ukraine in connection with the deterioration of the domestic political and economic situation in the RF	30.1	14.4
By force via a military offensive by the Armed Forces of Ukraine to the territory of the Crimea	13.6	9.6
Should Russian citizens insist that the Crimea be returned as quickly as possible to Ukraine	13.0	7.5
Other	1.0	0.8
Difficult to say	10.8	8.9

*It was possible to choose up to three responses

In your opinion, is it worth it, in order to establish a truce and peace, to “trade” the Crimea for Donbas, that is to recognize Russia’s annexation of the Crimea in exchange for Russia’s withdrawal from the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and cessation of its support for the so-called ‘DPR’ and ‘LPR’?

	<i>August 2018</i>
No, because the Crimea is Ukraine’s territory	52.7
No, because Russia will all the same pursue an aggressive policy in its relation to Ukraine	13.1
Yes, this is possible if Russia pays reparations to Ukraine for its lost assets in the Crimea	5.2
Any offer must be agreed upon that would bring peace, even at the expense of the Crimea	10.8
Other	0.3
Difficult to say	17.9

As is known, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea was not financially self-sufficient within Ukraine. Are you ready to support the renewal of financial subsidies to the Crimea via the state budget in case it is returned to Ukraine? (*% of those surveyed*)

	<i>May 2016</i>	<i>August 2018</i>
Yes, absolutely	14.5	9.8
Rather, yes	26.9	24.6
Rather, no	13.4	14.2
No. The Crimea should resolve its financial issues by itself	29.4	34.1
Difficult to say	15.8	17.3

Should the Crimea return to the legal space of Ukraine, are you ready to financially support programs that are aimed at the integration of the Crimea to Ukraine? (*% of those surveyed*)

	<i>August 2018</i>
Yes, absolutely	6.3
Yes, this is possible	16.0
Most likely, no	33.2
Categorically no	29.5
Difficult to say	15.0

Do you support the creation of Crimean-Tatar national autonomy after Crimea’s liberation from occupation and its return to Ukraine?

	<i>August 2018</i>
Yes, I absolutely support this	18.0

Rather support	32.0
Rather don't support	16.7
Absolutely don't support	11.6
Difficult to say	21.7

In your opinion, is it worth restricting access to occupied Crimea for residents of other regions of Ukraine?

	<i>August 2018</i>
Yes, entry/exit to and from the Crimea should be allowed only with special permits and with justified reason (visiting family, property ownership, etc.)	11.2
Overall, the existing entry/exit system is completely fine – with documentation proving a person's Ukrainian citizenship (for non-citizens of Ukraine – by special permission)	29.9
The current entry/exit system to and from the Crimea should be simplified as much as possible for Ukrainian citizens, including residents of the Crimea.	40.7
Other	0.2
Difficult to say	18.0

REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION

In your opinion, should the Crimea be a part of Russia, Ukraine, or would it be better for it to become an independent de-facto state (like Abkhazia, Southern Ossetia and Transnistria)?

	<i>West</i>	<i>Center</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>East</i>
The Crimea should be a part of Russia	1.4	2.8	3.4	9.9
The Crimea should be a part of Ukraine	82.8	80.8	56.4	44.8
The Crimea should be an independent state construct	4.5	10.1	24.1	17.9
Difficult to say	11.3	6.3	16.1	27.4

In your opinion, is it possible to return the territory of Crimea back into the fold of Ukraine in the future?

	<i>West</i>	<i>Center</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>East</i>
Yes, and in the near future	8.9	4.9	3.8	3.7
Most likely yes, it's possible but in the long-term future	55.6	48.9	25.1	28.9
It's likely not possible already	14.7	20.7	23.7	22.6
No, absolutely impossible. Ukraine has lost the Crimea forever	5.7	9.1	27.0	28.4
Difficult to say	15.1	16.4	20.4	16.4

If you believe that it's possible to return the Crimea, then in which way (under what circumstances) is the restoration of Ukraine's sovereignty over the territory of Crimea possible?* (*% of those who believe that the Crimea can be returned*)

	<i>West</i>	<i>Center</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>East</i>
By force via a military offensive by the Armed Forces of Ukraine to the Crimean territory	11.2	9.8	3.4	9.4
Should reforms be enacted and overall living standards improve in Ukraine, which would attract residents of the Crimea	24.1	34.2	53.9	27.1
Should the current sanctions regime and pressure by the international community be preserved that would force the RF to return the peninsula to Ukraine	16.0	19.2	6.0	12.4
Should tighter sanctions be imposed on the RF by the international community that would force the RF to return the Crimea to Ukraine	42.3	29.8	16.7	23.7
Should a change in power (president) in the Russian Federation occur	41.3	44.6	22.3	28.4
Should Russian citizens insist that Crimea be returned as quickly as possible to Ukraine	6.2	5.8	14.2	11.3
The Crimea will on its own return to Ukraine in connection with the deterioration of the domestic political and economic situation in	12.1	15.1	21.4	14.5

the RF.				
Other	0.0	1.3	0.0	1.3
Difficult to say	9.4	6.9	14.5	10.7

*It was possible to choose up to three responses

In your opinion, is it worth it, in order to establish a truce and peace, to “trade” the Crimea for Donbas, that is to recognize Russia’s annexation of the Crimea in exchange for Russia’s withdrawal from the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and cessation of its support for the so-called ‘DPR’ and ‘LPR’?

	<i>West</i>	<i>Center</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>East</i>
No, because the Crimea is Ukraine’s territory	56.6	63.8	49.6	34.2
No, because Russia will all the same pursue an aggressive policy in its relation to Ukraine	23.9	13.3	6.0	6.7
Yes, this is possible if Russia pays reparations to Ukraine for its lost assets in the Crimea	1.9	5.1	4.4	8.8
Any offer must be agreed upon that would bring peace, even at the expense of the Crimea	5.4	5.1	22.8	18.5
Other	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.7
Difficult to say	12.2	12.3	17.2	31.1

As is known, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea was not financially self-sufficient within Ukraine. Are you ready to support the renewal of financial subsidies to the Crimea via the state budget in case it is returned to Ukraine? (% of those surveyed in each region)

	<i>West</i>	<i>Center</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>East</i>
Yes, absolutely	10.5	9.6	8.7	10.0
Rather, yes	32.4	29.7	20.6	12.0
Rather, no	11.9	17.1	12.7	12.9
No. The Crimea should resolve its financial issues by itself	24.7	26.5	38.4	51.5
Difficult to say	20.5	17.1	19.6	13.6

Should the Crimea return to the legal space of Ukraine, would you personally be ready to financially support programs that are aimed at the integration of the Crimea to Ukraine? (% of those surveyed in each region)

	<i>West</i>	<i>Center</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>East</i>
Yes, absolutely	5.8	7.1	3.0	6.8
Yes, this is possible	23.9	16.6	7.2	12.2
Most likely, no	32.0	43.1	30.9	21.3
Categorically no	17.7	22.9	34.9	47.2
Difficult to say	20.6	10.3	24.0	12.5

Do you support the creation of Crimean-Tatar national autonomy after Crimea’s liberation from occupation and its return to Ukraine?

	<i>West</i>	<i>Center</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>East</i>
Yes, I absolutely support this	23.2	18.0	8.8	17.6
Rather support	32.4	41.0	27.2	20.8
Rather don’t support	15.3	15.6	15.9	20.0
Absolutely don’t support	6.9	6.9	18.5	19.3
Difficult to say	22.2	18.5	29.6	22.3

In your opinion, is it worth restricting access to the occupied Crimea for residents of other regions of Ukraine?

	<i>West</i>	<i>Center</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>East</i>
Yes, entry/exit to and from the Crimea should be allowed only with special permits and with justified reason (visiting family, property ownership, etc.)	25.8	6.8	4.4	7.6
Overall, the existing entry/exit system is completely fine – with documentation proving a person’s Ukrainian citizenship (for non-citizens of Ukraine – by special permission)	26.8	36.7	27.0	24.2
The current entry/exit system to and from the Crimea must be simplified as much as possible for Ukrainian citizens, including residents of Crimea.	26.9	39.1	51.5	50.2
Other	0.0	0.4	0.3	0.2
Difficult to say	20.5	17.0	16.8	17.8