

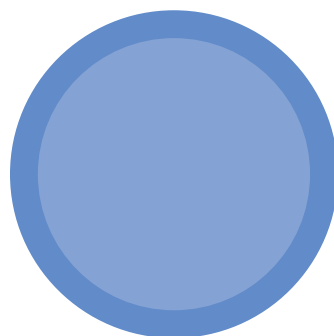
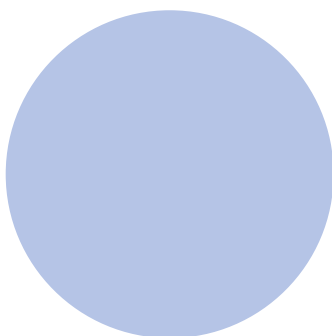
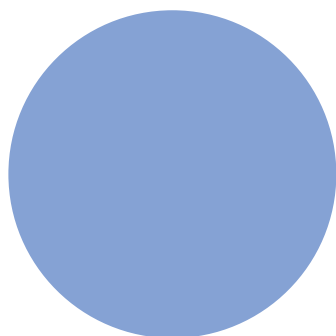
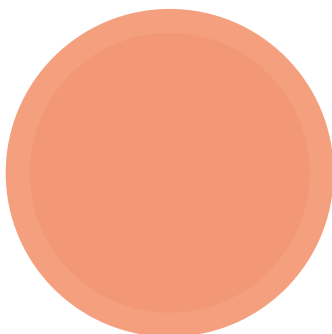
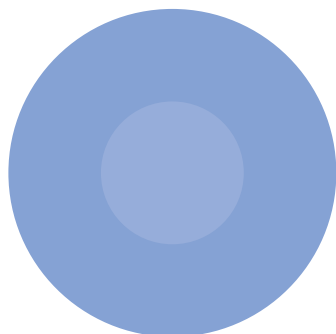
POLAND AND POLES

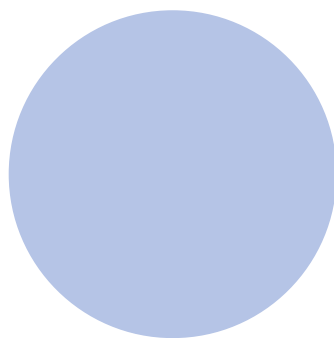
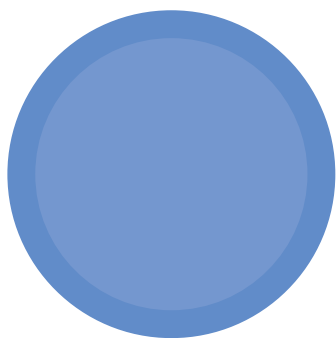
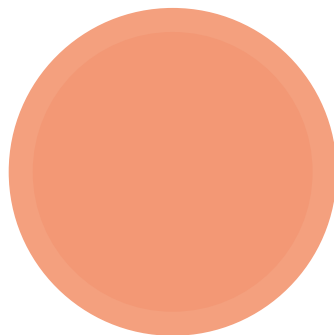
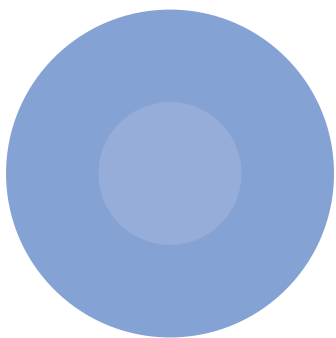
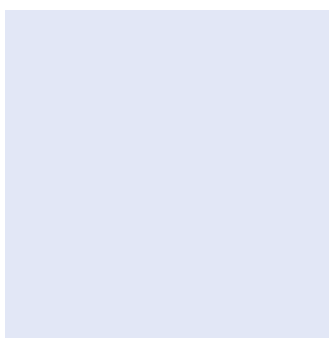


Warsaw 2022
Mieroszewski Centre

Findings from a public opinion poll conducted in Ukraine

AS SEEN BY UKRAINIANS







POLAND AND POLES AS SEEN BY UKRAINIANS

Findings from a public opinion poll conducted in Ukraine

Survey provider

Info Sapiens

Analysis and report

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Introduction

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1. Introduction: Background and objectives of the study

Europe has been shaken by Russia's vicious attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022, which evoked vivid images of Germany's aggression against Poland or the Soviet Union's aggression against Finland in 1939, also drawing attention to the crimes committed by the Russian army in Ukraine and the genocidal slogans spread by the Kremlin and its propaganda. A huge wave of solidarity with the invaded country swept across the continent.

Political discussions have focused on finding ways to support Ukraine and developing a desirable strategy towards Russia and the Russians. Poland took an active part in those efforts, demanding the greatest possible military and political assistance for Ukraine and the toughest possible retaliation against Russia, but it also undertook a number of measures, providing comprehensive support to the victim of aggression. Indeed, Poland took in a few million Ukrainian refugees who came during the first weeks of the war, and became one of the leaders in supplying military equipment and armaments to Ukraine, third only to the US and the UK in absolute numbers. Right from the outset, Poland also demonstrated political solidarity with Ukraine, evidenced, for instance, in the Polish President's three visits to Ukraine during the war as well as the joint visit to besieged Kyiv by the Prime Ministers of Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia in March 2022.

Poland's assistance to Ukraine and Poles' solidarity with Ukrainians, widely reported by the Ukrainian media, coupled with Ukrainians' impressions of their stay in Poland, shared with family members or friends, could not have stayed without resonance, impacting attitudes towards Poland and Poles. But what was the impact specifically? In order to find out, an all-Ukrainian opinion poll was conducted by Info Sapiens, a Ukrainian research provider, and the Mieroszewski Centre, a Polish public institution operating under an act of law adopted by the Polish Parliament, with a mission to engage in and support the dialogue between Poles and Ukrainians as well as other Eastern European nations.

As expected, the survey brought highly positive responses, especially when viewed from the perspective of the possibilities and opportunities for Polish-Ukrainian relations in the future.

Above all, the survey confirmed the overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards Poland and the Poles in Ukraine, exceeding 80%, paralleled with a negligible level of dislike (at less than 1%). These figures can be contrasted with attitudes towards the Germans, who are liked by only 42% of Ukrainians and arouse a sense of dislike in 4%. Attitudes towards the Russians as a nation are the opposite to those towards the Poles, with 86% of Ukrainian respondents disliking the Russians and just under 2% liking them.

Other survey data also confirm the existence of an enormous 'capital of trust' among Ukrainians vis-à-vis, which

legitimises political initiatives to strengthen the ties between the two countries. One example is the set of answers to questions about the best phrase to describe the mutual relationship between the Ukrainians and the Poles, or about the target model of future Polish-Ukrainian relations. The survey has found that a third of Ukrainians think of Poles as brothers and sisters, 29% of Ukrainians would like to see a standing alliance between the two countries, and the same share (29%) even advocate a commonwealth of the two countries, with mutually agreed foreign policy and freedom for the citizens of both countries to freely work and settle in the other country. In simpler terms, this would resemble the Sweden-Norway model. Also noteworthy is that nearly one in five Ukrainians (with one in three in the region of Galicia, i.e. Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk and Ternopil districts) admitted that they have or had Poles in their family, of which the overwhelming majority mentioned blood relatives rather than relatives by affinity. This is a meaningful finding: both countries are predestined to maintain close relations not only thanks to the shared vision of the future, similar languages, culture or common history, but also thanks to the family ties linking Poles and Ukrainians. Certainly, personal impressions or family members' accounts of their stay in Poland after 24 February 2022 have also contributed to the positive perception of Poland. In fact, one in four Ukrainians said they personally have been to Poland or someone from their family has visited it, and 84% of this group declared that they like Poland as a country to live in, with only 6% expressing a dislike.

The survey also revealed two possible threats to the development of mutual relations. One is the susceptibility of a certain group of Ukrainians to Russian propaganda invoking historical myths, and to codes prevailing in Ukrainian national culture, where Poles play the role of 'strangers' or 'foreigners', and sometimes also 'villains'. Although 76% of the respondents do not believe that Poles are thinking of reclaiming Ukrainian lands, 17% believe that this may be at least partly true. While the survey did not ask about the proponents of such slanderous messages, it is known that such efforts are regularly undertaken by the Kremlin as well as its subordinated formal and informal structures. Indeed, such information could have distorted responses due to associations with hostile Russia. However, the problem of historically conditioned distrust towards Poles and Poland continues to exist. While it is disappearing in

confrontation with the attitudes demonstrated by contemporary Poland and contemporary Poles, such distrust can still be harboured by a small yet noticeable group of followers as a tool of Russian disinformation that undermines the good relations between Poland and Ukraine. This group of respondents is concentrated particularly in the south and east of Ukraine where, as detailed data have shown, it reaches 20%.

The second threat, probably greater, is the problem associated with the Ukrainian authorities' defensive attitude towards the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), and their unwillingness to acknowledge that this nationalist partisan formation was responsible for ethnic cleansing against Poles in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia (known as the 'Volhynia Massacre' in Poland and usually labelled the 'Volhynian Tragedy' in Ukraine). There is also a rejection of the idea to establish cemeteries where the Polish victims of the Massacre would be buried, with the perpetrators of the murders identified by the name. On the one hand, it should be appreciated that almost 60% of Ukrainians agree with this idea, although they do so on condition that Poland would permit to establish graves of Ukrainians who died at the hands of Polish underground fighters, also with information about the perpetrators of these murders. On the other hand, it is worrying that almost 24% of Ukrainians strongly reject this idea, including 28% in Galicia, i.e. in the region where the veneration of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army is strongest. What is worse, almost a half of the surveyed young Ukrainians are reluctant about the idea to establish cemeteries of the Polish victims.

Another noteworthy fact is that when confronted with five interpretations of what the Massacre was, all taken from public discourse, Ukrainian respondents most often opted for theories that propose symmetry in responsibility for the murders, with 8% attributing responsibility to the Poles. Merely 13% acknowledged the guilt of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (with only 5% selecting the interpretation that prevails in Polish and Western scholarship, namely that the ethnic cleansing was carried out upon the orders of UPA leaders). This shows that the knowledge of the UPA's anti-Polish action is still limited and that Ukrainians are susceptible to interpretations promoted exclusively by Ukrainian historians that either diminish or deny UPA's responsibility for the Massacre.

However, this finding can also be explained differently. Observers have long pointed out that there is indeed little knowledge of the 'Volhynia Massacre' in the Ukrainian society. The present survey has only confirmed it: 22% of Ukrainians had not heard about the massacre at all, and 62% of respondents said they had only heard the phrase. Therefore, the answers to the question about the perpetrators of the crime can, in many cases, be viewed as a manifestation of the interpretations

which seemed most likely or even most attractive to the interviewees, rather than as an expression of their informed beliefs. What seems comforting in the historical context is that a third of Ukrainians consider the role of Poles in Ukrainian history to be 'mostly positive', while only 8% of the respondents felt it was 'mostly negative'. In the context of the cultural codes spread by Ukrainian schooling, and previously by the Soviet educational system, which negatively viewed the historical role of Poland and Poles, this high approval for Poland's role in Ukrainian history is a positive phenomenon in itself, encouraging further historical dialogue.

Finally, it is worth devoting some attention to the question that is perhaps less relevant to Ukrainian-Polish relations but of more significance to internal debates within Poland, namely about the attitude that should be adopted towards Ukraine and the Ukrainians. More specifically, this question concerns Ukrainians' acceptance of the traditional Polish phrase 'na Ukrainie' [literally 'on Ukraine', but grammatically correct in Polish] and whether or not Ukrainians find it offensive or outrageous, as argued by Polish opponents of this phrase, who promote the phrase 'w Ukrainie' [literally 'in Ukraine']. The survey question explained that the Polish language uses the preposition 'na' plus country name not only to refer to Ukraine, but also a number of other countries. Thus, it was suggested that the Polish usage of this phrase is different from that in Russian (a language known to virtually every Ukrainian), where 'na' is used to refer to island states and only one other country, namely Ukraine. This linguistic form is eagerly promoted by Russian imperialism and presented as a linguistic argument to support non-recognition of Ukraine's political identity. To avoid misunderstandings, we should add that this expression in Polish, with the preposition 'na', reflects the historical proximity between Poland and Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Slovakia, Belarus and Ukraine, and there is also a similar expression ('na Saksach') which might also indicate proximity to Saxony. The vast majority of the Ukrainian respondents (80%) turned out to be indifferent to this linguistic construction in the Polish language, often directly stating that they do not mind the phrase 'na Ukrainie'.

Overall, the present survey has revealed enormously positive attitudes towards the Poles as well as strong ties with Poland and the attractiveness of Poland in the eyes of Ukrainian respondents. As such, it provided arguments for those who support intensified Polish-Ukrainian relations and advocate for Polish-Ukrainian dialogue. It remains to be hoped that this capital can be now put to good use.

2. Information about the study

Methodology



→ Respondents:

Adult population of Ukraine (over 18 years old).

→ Method:

Computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) based on mobile phone numbers.

→ Timing:

The survey was conducted on 11–15 August 2022.

→ Geographic coverage:

Ukraine. Please note: The survey was not conducted in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Sevastopol and other Ukrainian territories temporarily occupied by Russia, where Ukrainian mobile operators do not provide mobile telephone services. Also, the survey did not cover Ukrainians who have left Ukraine for other countries.

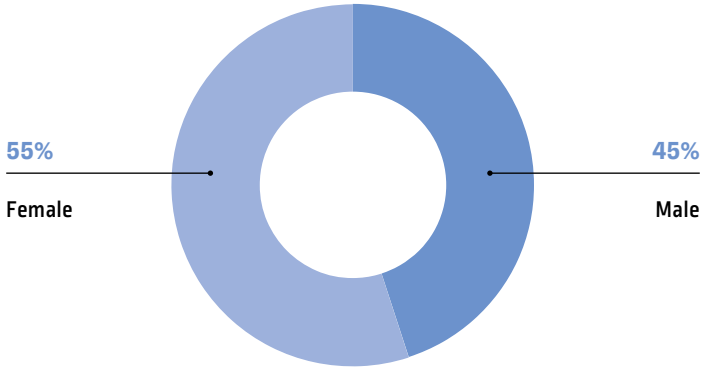
For this study, we singled out regions with historical ties to Poland: Galicia and Right-Bank Ukraine (excluding Galicia, Carpathian Ruthenia and Bukovina).

→ Additional information:

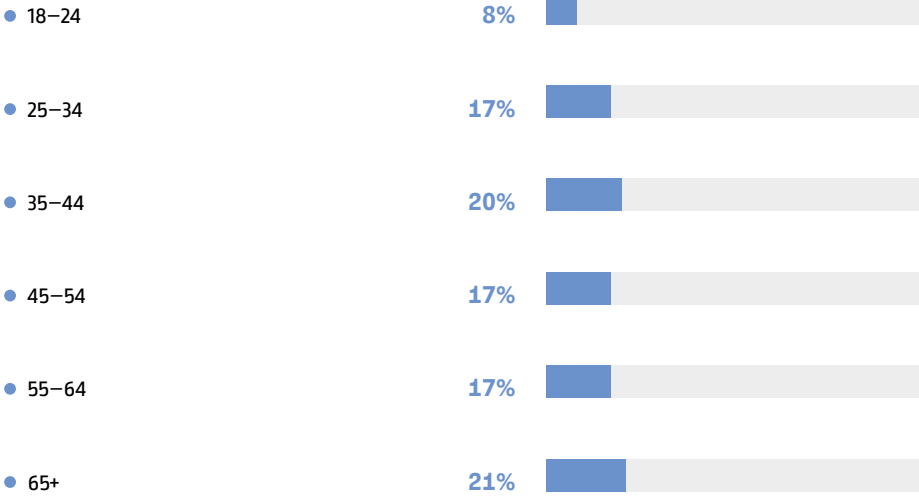
Note that the data on some of the graphs do not add up to 100% for multiple choice questions. With single-code questions there are small deviations from 100% when percentage values are rounded off.

Sample structure

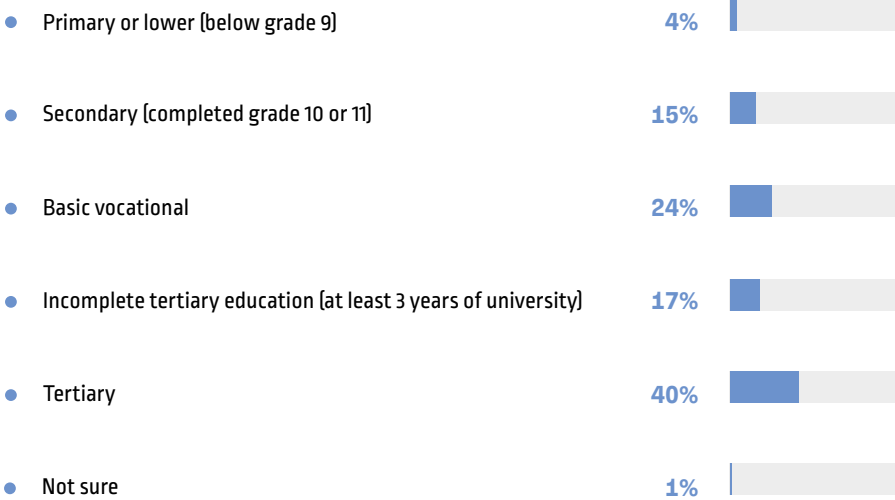
Gender



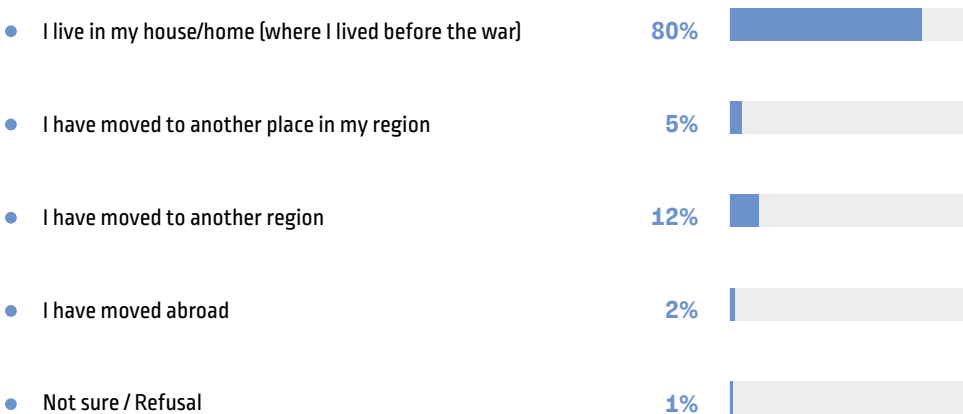
Age



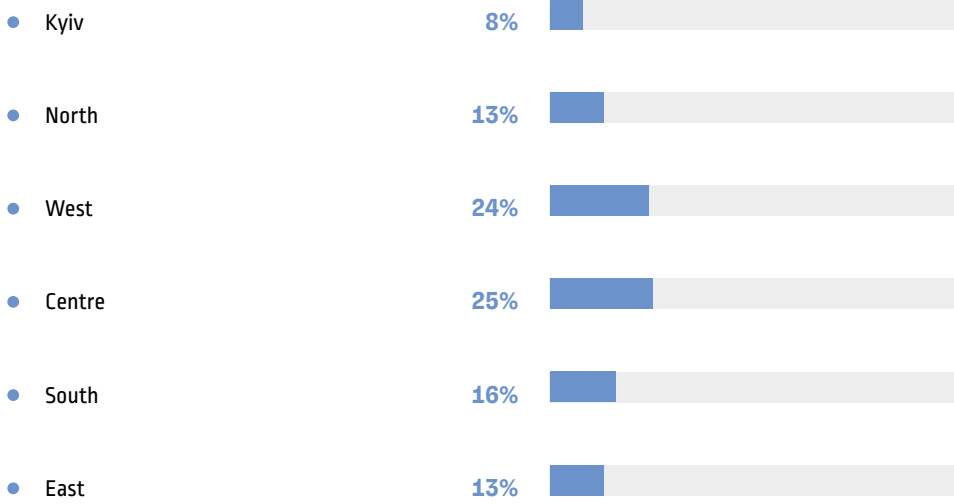
Education



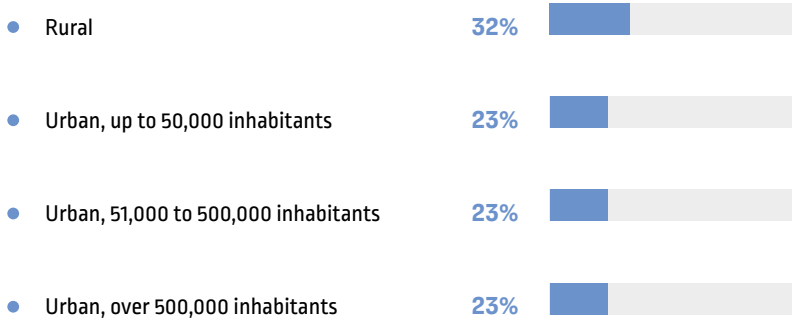
Which option best describes where you live?



Region



Domicile





Connections with Poland

Ukraine and Poland are linked by cultural and kinship ties.

→ About a half of Ukrainians (56%) either know the Polish language or understand it to some extent. In Galicia, the share of people who know Polish is larger than in other regions: 12% can communicate fluently and 74%

have some command or understanding of Polish. 36% of Ukrainians are interested in learning Polish. Among those who have some command or understanding of Polish, 44% are interested in learning this language.

↓ QUESTION:

Do you speak Polish?

3%

Yes, I do. I can read freely and talk easily with Poles

12%

I know it a little. I can read simple texts and communicate with Poles in simple matters

41%

I do not know it at all

44%

No, I don't, and I only understand Polish a little because it is a Slavic language

↓ QUESTION:

Would you like to start learning Polish if you could do it free of charge?

1%

Not sure

36%

Yes, I would be interested

63%

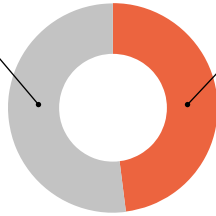
No, I am not interested

↓ QUESTION:

Would you like to brush up your Polish if you could do it free of charge?

52%

No, I am not interested



48%

Yes, I would be interested

0%

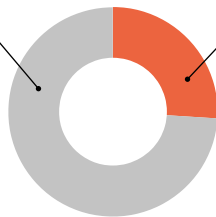
Not sure

↓ QUESTION:

Would you like to improve your Polish language skills if you could do it free of charge?

74%

No, I am not interested



26%

Yes, I would be interested

0%

Not sure

- A total of **36%** of Ukrainians have visited Poland at least once.
- Residents of Galicia have the strongest record here [**66%** of them visited Poland at least once].

→ In total, more than a half of those who visited Poland (**59%**) went there in the last five years, with **18%** going to Poland this year.

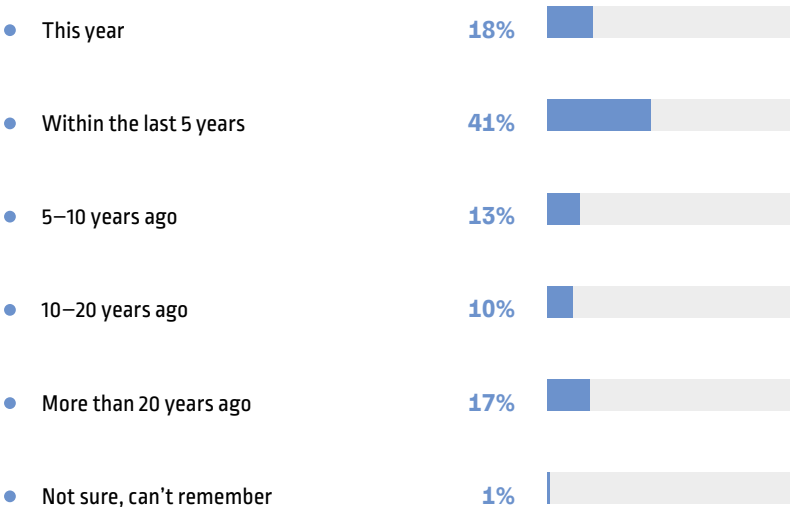
↓ QUESTION:

Have you been to Poland?



↓ QUESTION:

When was the last time you were in Poland?

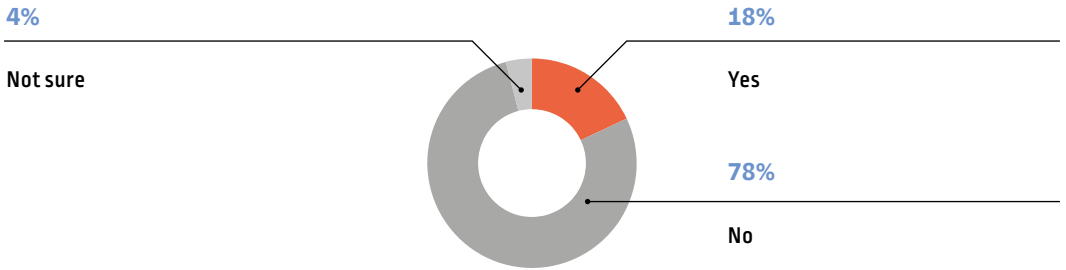


→ Overall, **18%** of Ukrainians have Poles in their families. Those are predominantly elderly relatives (**64%**), such as a grandfather or grandmother (**25%** on the

maternal side and **21%** on the paternal side), a great grandfather or great grandmother (**18%**).

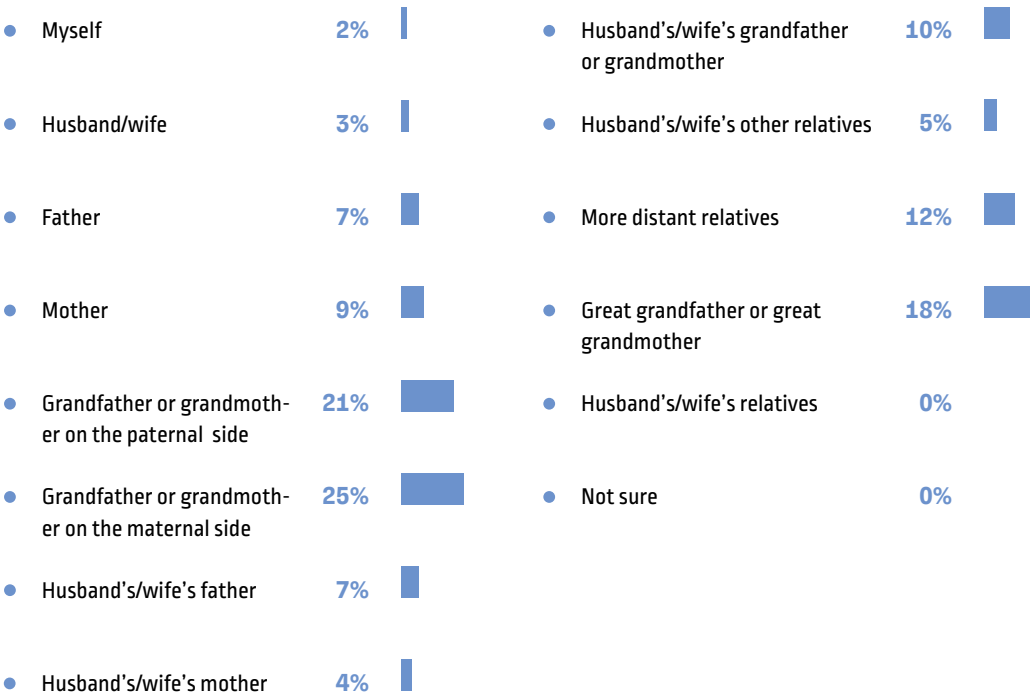
↓ QUESTION:

Were there / are there any Poles in your family?



↓ QUESTION:

Who exactly was/is a Pole in your family?

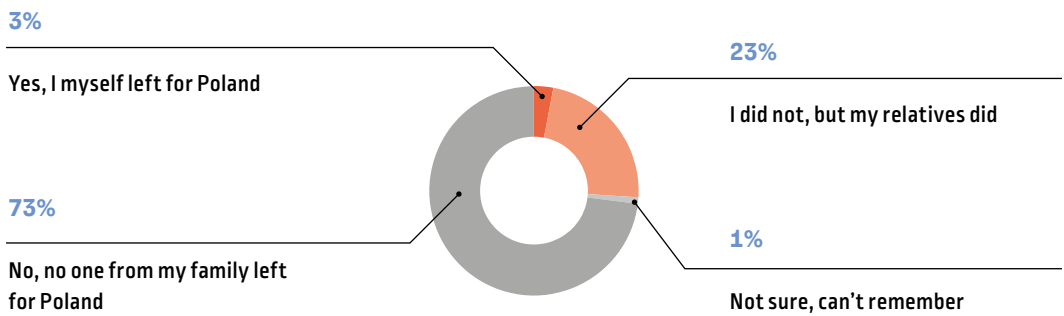


→ All in all, **26%** of Ukrainians either have relatives living currently in Poland or have themselves gone to Poland since the start of the full-scale invasion. Of these, **84%**

believe Poland is a very good or a fairly good country to live in.

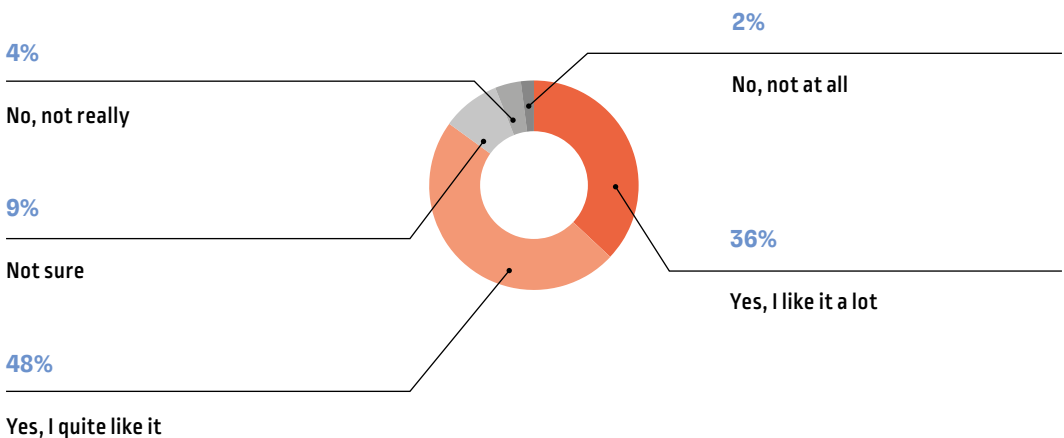
↓ QUESTION:

Are there any people in your family who left for Poland after 24 February 2022?



↓ QUESTION:

Do you like Poland as a country to live in?





4

Attitudes towards Poland and Poles



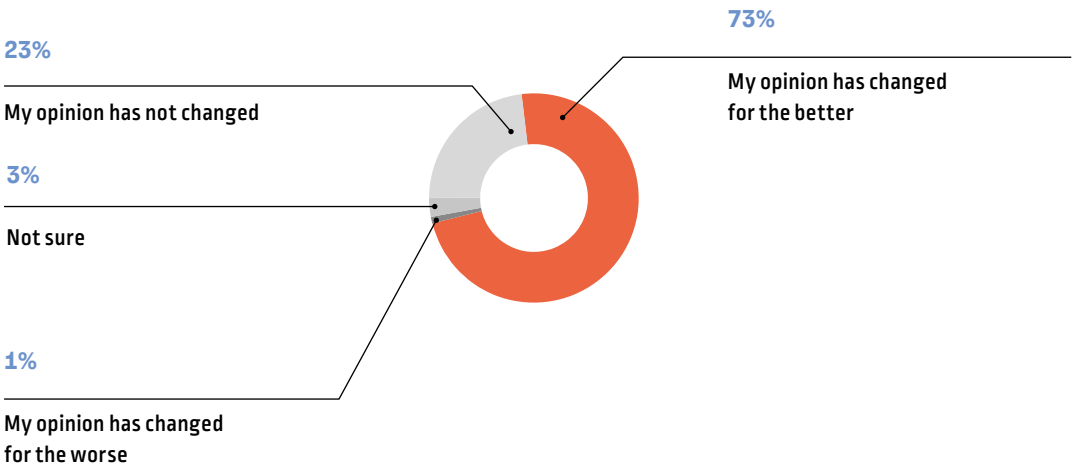
Ukrainians' opinion about Poles has improved since the outbreak of the large-scale war [73% reported an improvement]. Currently, 83% of the respondents have either a good or very good opinion of Poles.

→ When talking about their attitudes, the respondents mostly describe Poles as *neighbours* [54%], *allies* [52%] and *friends* [49%]. The option *brothers/sisters*

was selected somewhat less frequently [33%], probably due to negative attitudes towards the worn-out cliché 'brotherly peoples'.

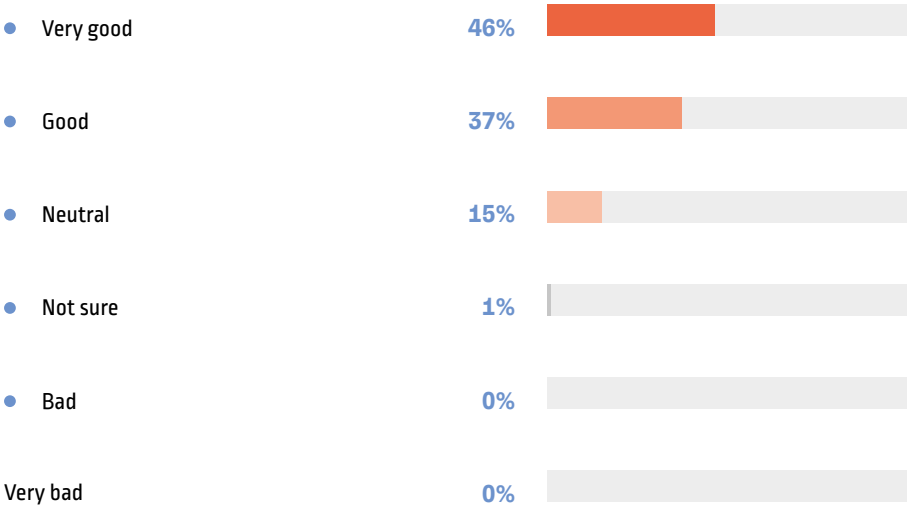
↓ QUESTION:

Please tell us about your opinion of the Poles in recent months, i.e. after the outbreak of the war:



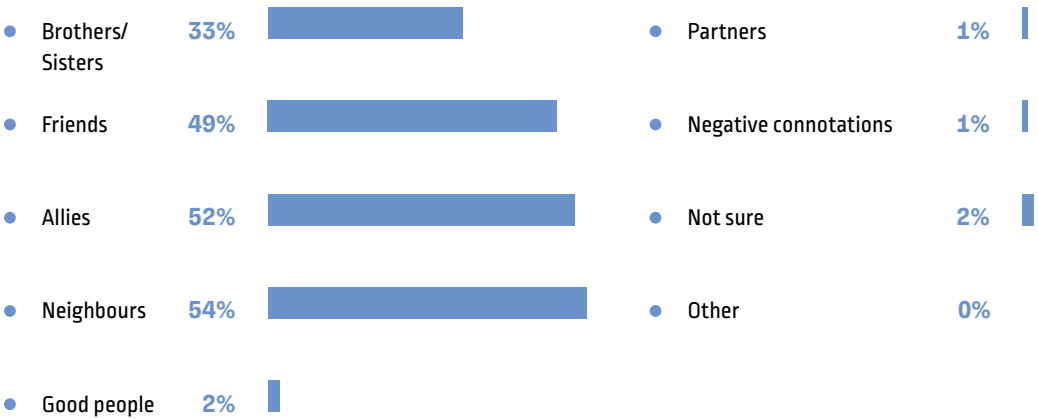
↓ QUESTION:

What is your opinion about the Poles now?



↓ QUESTION:

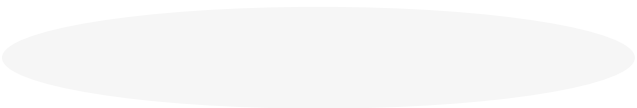
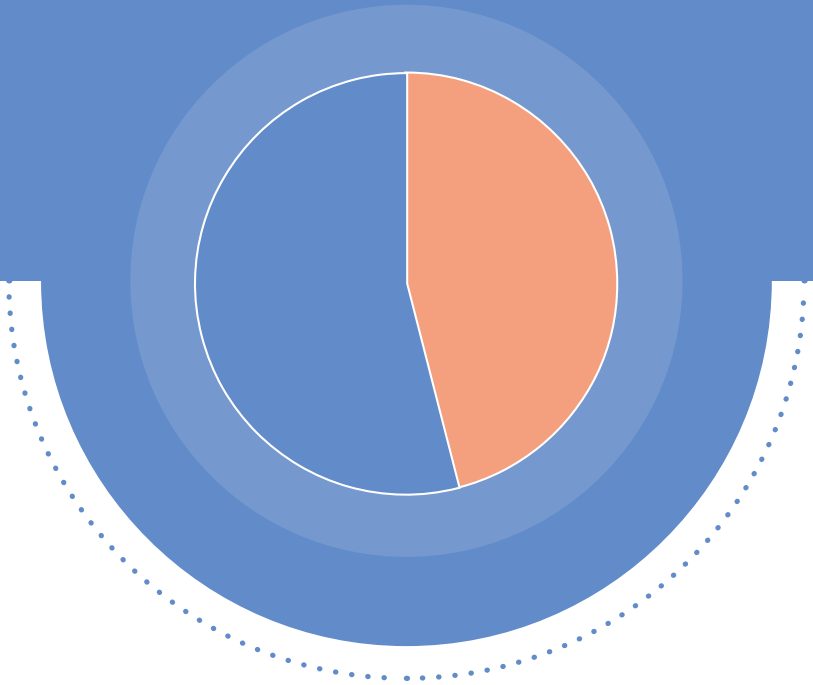
*Which of these phrases best describes your attitude towards the Poles?
[multiple choice]*



What is your opinion
about the Poles now?

Very good

46%

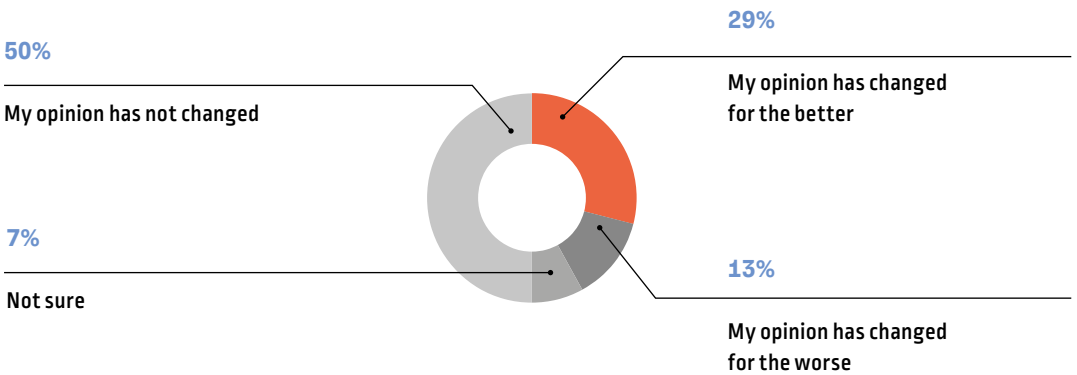


→ A total of **83%** of Ukrainians have a good or very good attitude towards Poles. A neutral attitude prevails with regard to Germans (**52%**), while most respondents

report a negative or very negative attitude towards Russians (**86%**).

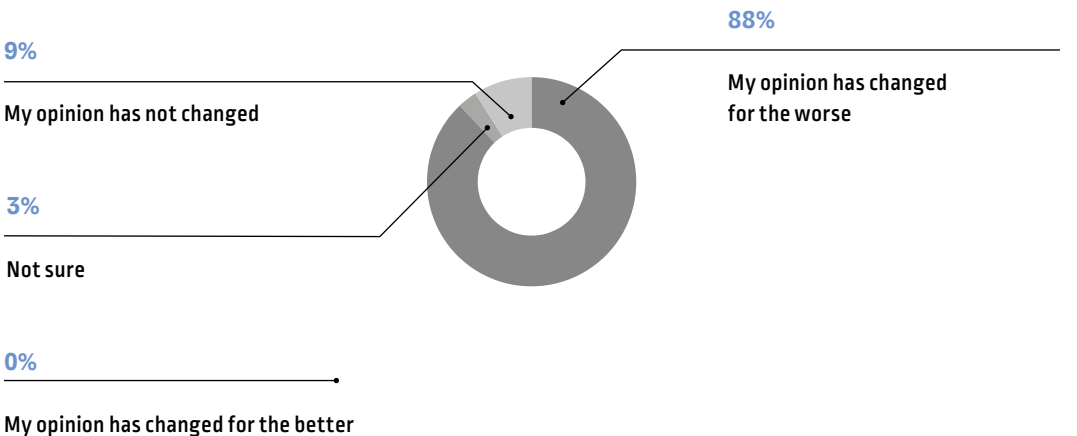
↓ QUESTION:

Please tell us about your opinion of the Germans in recent months, i.e. after the outbreak of the war:



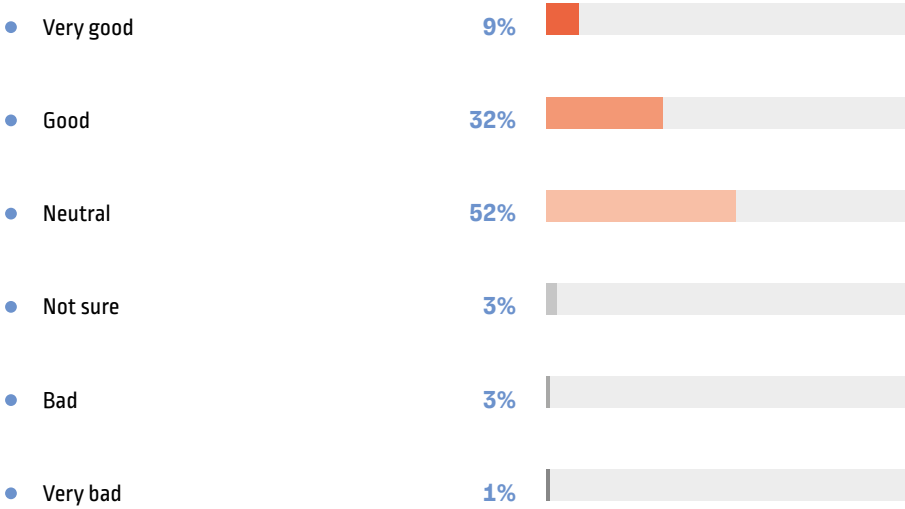
↓ QUESTION:

Please tell us about your opinion of the Russians (living in Russia) in recent months, i.e. after the outbreak of the war:



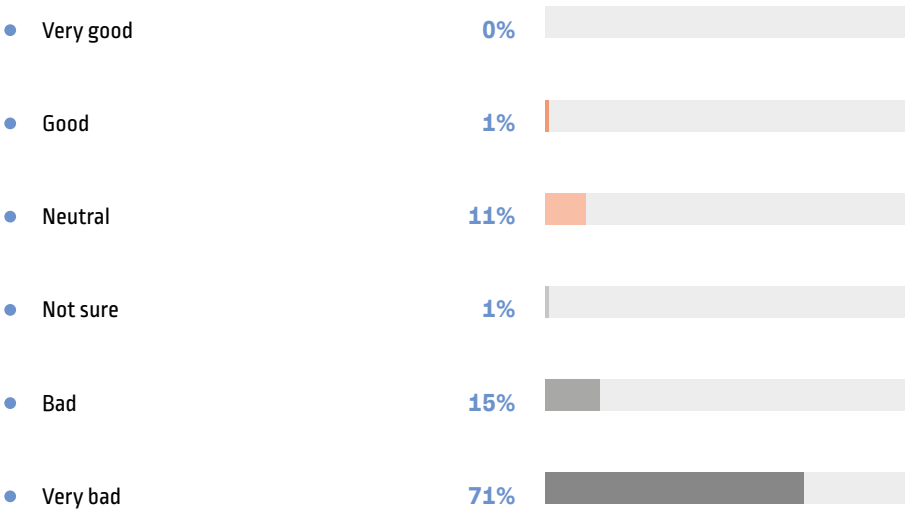
↓ QUESTION:

What is your opinion about the Germans now?



↓ QUESTION:

What is your opinion about the Russians now?



→ According to the Institute of Sociology (National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine), Ukrainians believed that Russians were the closest people to them until 2014, but after the occupation of Crimea and Donbass Belarusians became the closest people in Ukrainian perception. At present, the majority of Ukrainians have a negative attitude towards Russians, a relative majority negatively view Belarusians, while Poles have become the closest nation.

→ Enmity towards Russia (70%) and sympathy for Ukrainians (69%) were identified by the respondents as factors equally motivating Poles to help Ukraine. Far fewer respondents indicated more 'selfish' reasons, such as Poland's demand for Ukrainian workforce (chosen by 27%), and only 6% said that Poland considers some of Ukraine's territories to be its own.

↓ QUESTION:

In your opinion, why are Poles helping Ukraine?

(multiple choice)

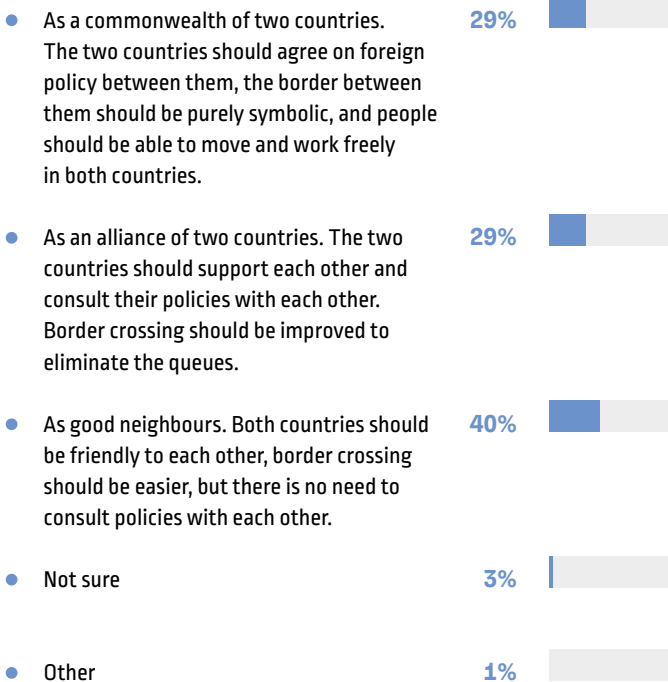


→ Overall, **58%** of Ukrainians think that the two countries should get closer and move beyond just being good neighbours. In particular, **29%** prefer union-like relations with mutual support and a coordinated foreign policy, and another **29%** believe that the relations should take the form of a commonwealth with a purely symbolic border and a common foreign policy. In contrast, **40%** think that good neighbourly relations are sufficient.

→ Galicia is the only region where just over a half of Ukrainians (**53%**) do not wish to get too close to Poland, possibly because of the memories of Polish domination in the past.

↓ QUESTION:

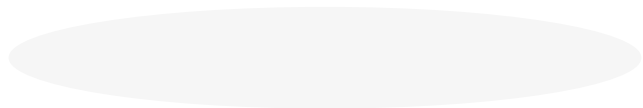
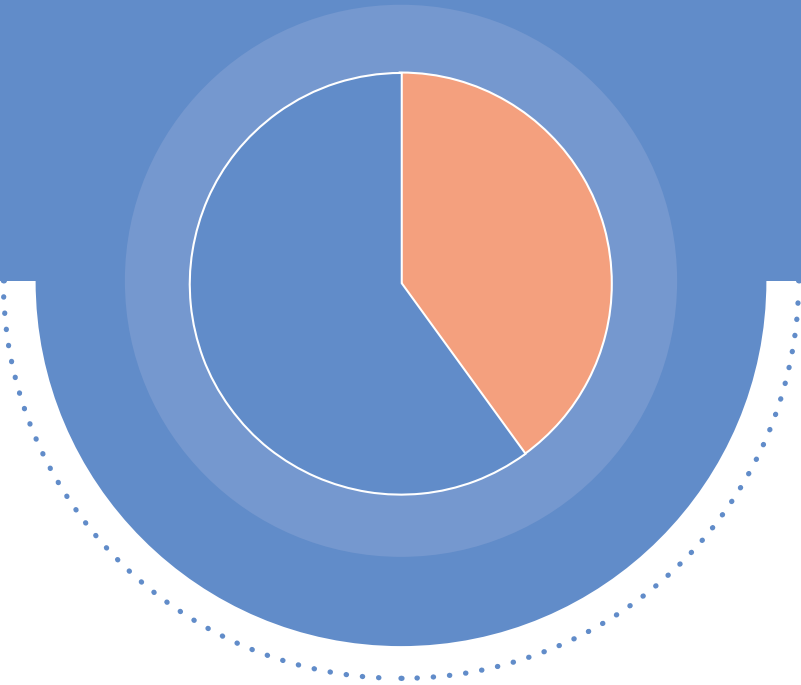
In your opinion, what should Poland-Ukraine relations ultimately look like?



In your opinion, what should Poland-Ukraine relations ultimately look like?

As good neighbours

40%



→ Ukrainians do not trust information about Poland's plans to take over Western Ukraine. In fact, **76%** consider it to be a lie, **16%** admit that such news may be partly true, and only **1%** believe in such messages.

→ In Galicia and Right-Bank Ukraine, the share of those who do not believe such news is somewhat higher (**81%** and **82%** respectively).

↓ QUESTION:

There are messages on the Internet about Poland's aggressive plans towards Ukraine, its desire to seize Western Ukraine and turn Ukraine into a Polish protectorate. In your view, how truthful are such reports?

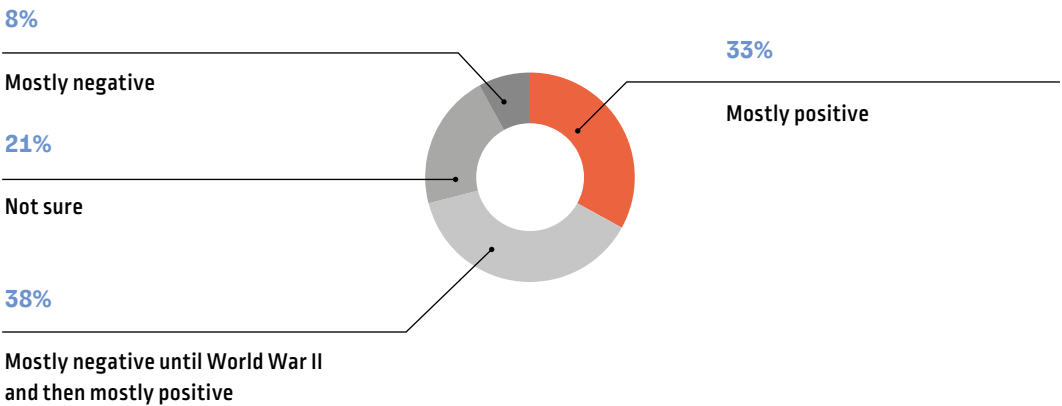


→ A relative majority of Ukrainians [38%] believe that Poland's role in the history of Ukraine was predominantly negative before World War II (obviously because Poland acted as a conqueror in those times), while its role was predominantly positive after World War II (because Poland became Ukraine's ally in the fight against Russia). Another 33% consider Poland's role

throughout history to be predominantly positive, and only 8% describe it as predominantly negative.
 → Residents of Galicia assess the role of Poles somewhat less positively: with only 23% considering it predominantly positive, and 12% expressing a negative opinion.

↓ QUESTION:

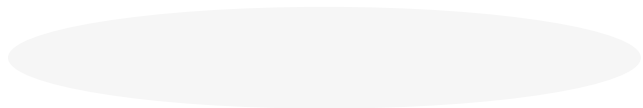
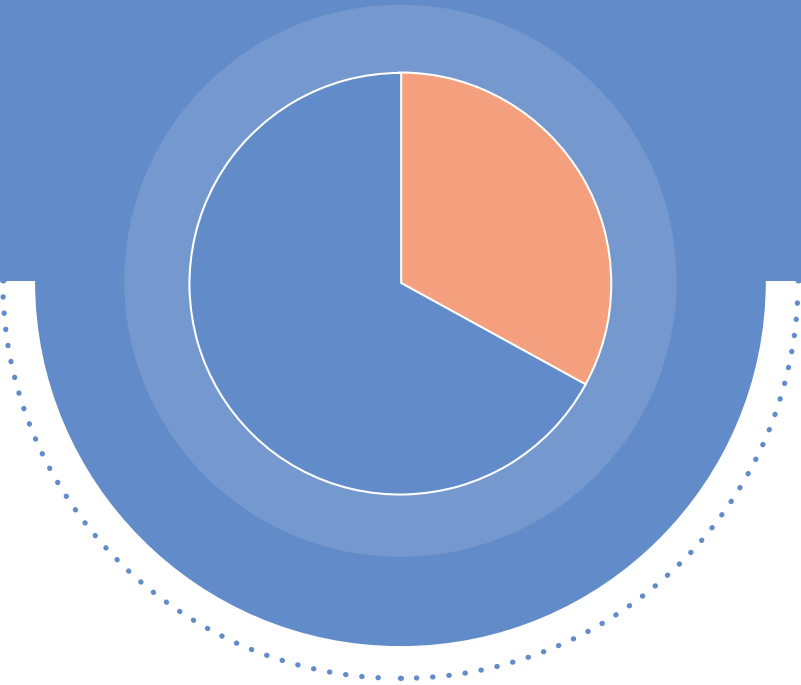
What has been the role of the Poles in Ukrainian history?



What has been the role of the Poles in Ukrainian history?

Mostly positive

770
00%





5

Attitudes towards selected aspects of Polish-Ukrainian relations

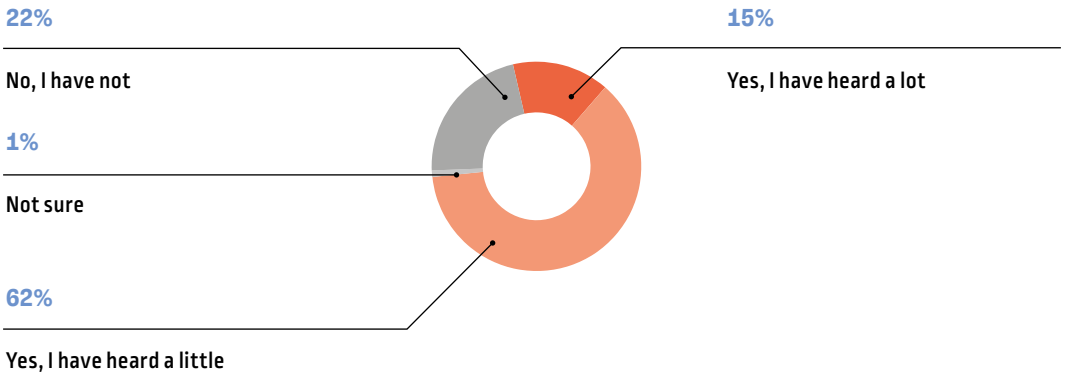
The 'Volhynia Massacre' was one of the most tragic moments in the history of Ukraine and Poland: **15%** of Ukrainians are well informed and **62%** have heard something about it.

Among them, **42%** found it difficult to articulate what the Volhynia Massacre was. A relative majority, i.e. **27%**, believe it was a mutual war between the Ukrainian and Polish

underground forces, which resulted in casualties among the Ukrainian and Polish civilian populations.

↓ QUESTION:

Have you heard of the World War II events known to historians as the "Volhynian Tragedy" or the "Volhynia Massacre"?



↓ QUESTION:

Historians have different opinions about what the Volhynian Tragedy or the Volhynia Massacre was. And what was it in your opinion?

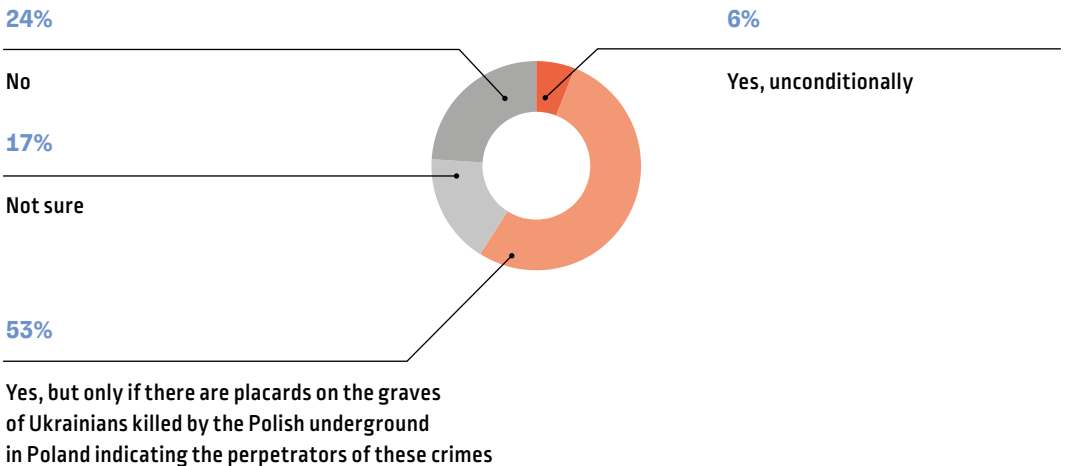


Poland demands the possibility of carrying out exhumation works on the sites of former Polish villages in Volhynia and Galicia, and many Poles want to establish cemeteries with crosses there, and install placards with information that the inhabitants of these villages were killed by the

Ukrainian Insurgent Army. A half of Ukrainians (53%) are ready to agree to this, provided that similar monuments to Ukrainian victims of the Polish underground are erected, another 6% are ready to accept this idea unconditionally, and 24% do not accept it.

↓ QUESTION:

Poland is demanding the possibility to carry out exhumation works on the sites of former Polish villages, and many Poles would like to see graves established there with placards indicating that the inhabitants of these villages were killed by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). Do you think Ukraine should agree to this?

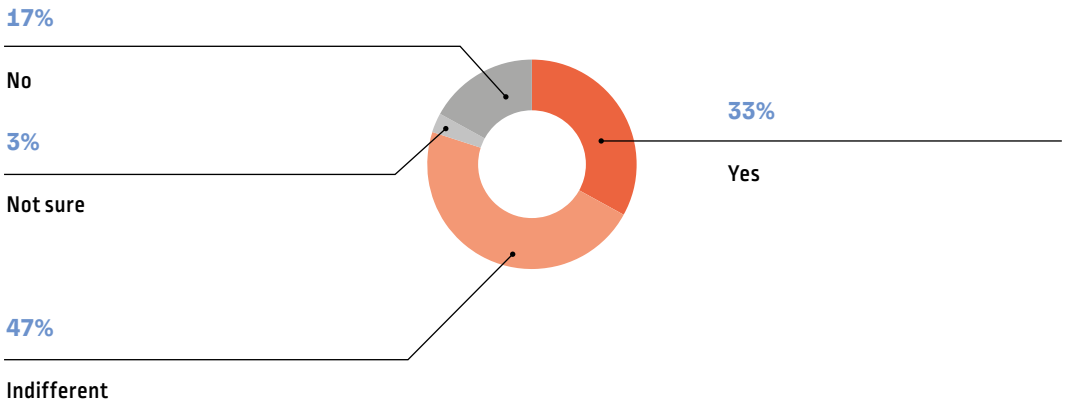


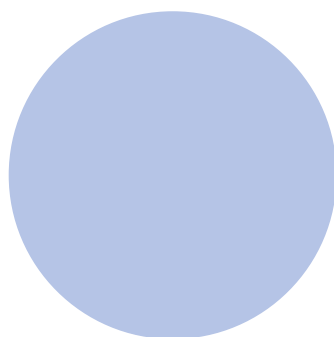
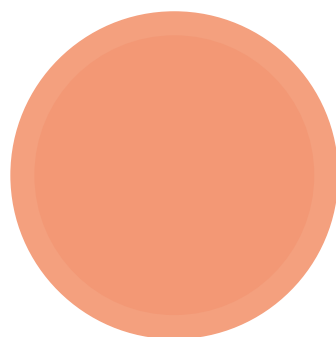
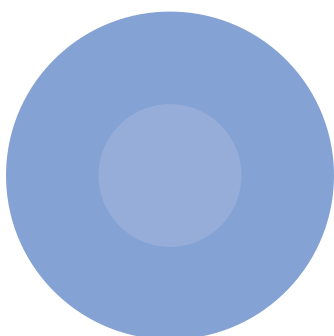
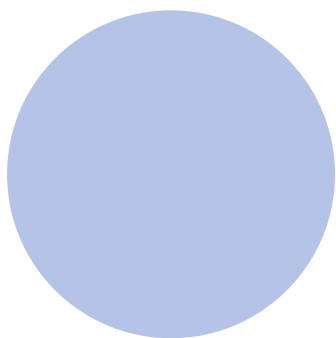
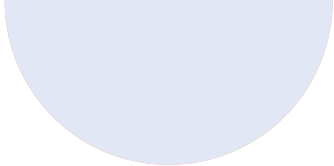
The respondents received an explanation that when Poles talk about other countries, verbal constructions with the preposition 'on' [Polish: 'na'] are acceptable [literally: on Hungary, on Slovakia] and then were asked about the acceptability of the phrase 'on Ukraine' [Polish: 'na Ukrainie']. The respondents are mostly indifferent to this collocation

(47%) or are willing to accept it (33%), with only 17% not ready to accept it. If this collocation continues to be used in Polish, we recommend informing Ukrainians about it being naturally used in the language [as opposed to Russian, where only the preposition 'in' is used with names of countries, i.e. 'in Ukraine'].

↓ QUESTION:

Is the Polish phrase 'na Ukrainie' [lit. on Ukraine] acceptable to you?









This report presents the results of a survey of Ukrainian public opinion commissioned by the Mieroszewski Centre in August 2022. It confirmed the overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards Poland and the Poles, exceeding 80%, paralleled with a negligible level of dislike, less than 1%, as well as Ukrainians' approval of further strengthening of ties between Poland and Ukraine.



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Mieroszewski Centre is state institution established by the act of the Polish Parliament and supervised by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland. Our mission is to conduct, initiate, and support projects aimed at building dialogue between Poles and the nations of Eastern Europe, in particular Ukrainians, Belarusians, Georgians, Moldovans, as well as those Russians who condemn the crimes of Vladimir Putin's regime. Juliusz Mieroszewski, our patron, was one of the most prominent Polish political writers of the 20th century. He was an advocate of Polish cooperation with other nations enslaved by Russian and Soviet imperialism.