



ROLES INSIGHTS

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Shifting Trust: Ukrainian Sentiments Towards Social Institutions Before and During War

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The quality of the relationship between citizens and the state is crucial for the well-being, development, and long-term stability and survival of nations, even during times of peace. However, during times of war, this relationship takes on a unique and heightened significance. The citizens' respectful attitude toward their state and its core institutions is a key factor in maintaining societal stability, resisting aggression, and ensuring the effective functioning of state institutions, the political system, and the economy.

The way Ukrainians perceive their own state, specifically their subjective assessments of its strength and self-sufficiency, has experienced significant fluctuations in recent years. Particularly notable shifts in perceptions occurred during the intense period of large-scale warfare, leading to an unprecedented sense of unity within the nation, including in their assessments of the state.

According to surveys conducted by the Institute of Sociology of Ukraine, as of November 2021, there was a noticeable and concerning trend of pessimism in the way people perceived their government in Ukraine. This negative sentiment was prevalent among two-thirds of the population. However, these sentiments shifted dramatically with the outbreak of a large-scale war, when more than 80% of the population began giving positive or neutral assessments of their state. It can be assumed that the war galvanized Ukrainian society to defend its statehood, resulting in a marked improvement in attitudes toward the state. However, this outcome proved unstable, as even substantial societal mobilization failed to yield quick results; instead, the war escalated further. Unfortunately, subsequent developments have indicated a troubling decline in optimism. By 2023,

the number of positive assessments toward the state and its social institutions had dropped by more than half. This decline can largely be attributed to negative systemic events linked to the actions of government officials.

War also reshapes the focal points of societal trust in state authorities. Episodes of heroic resistance by the armed forces, coupled with the mere fact that Ukrainian society, the military, and the government endured the initial stages of the war, have further bolstered the already high level of trust in institutions associated with state defense: the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the National Guard, volunteer corps, and the President, who embodies and continues to project the image of an unwavering leader. According to the most recent surveys, among state and public institutions, the most trusted are the State Emergency Service (81%), the State Border Service (78%), the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine (75%), the Security Service of Ukraine (67%), the National Police of Ukraine (61%), the Mayor of the city (township, village) where the respondent lives (60.5%), public organizations (60%), churches (58%), Ukrainian mass media (56%), and the council of the city (township, village) where the respondent lives (55%).

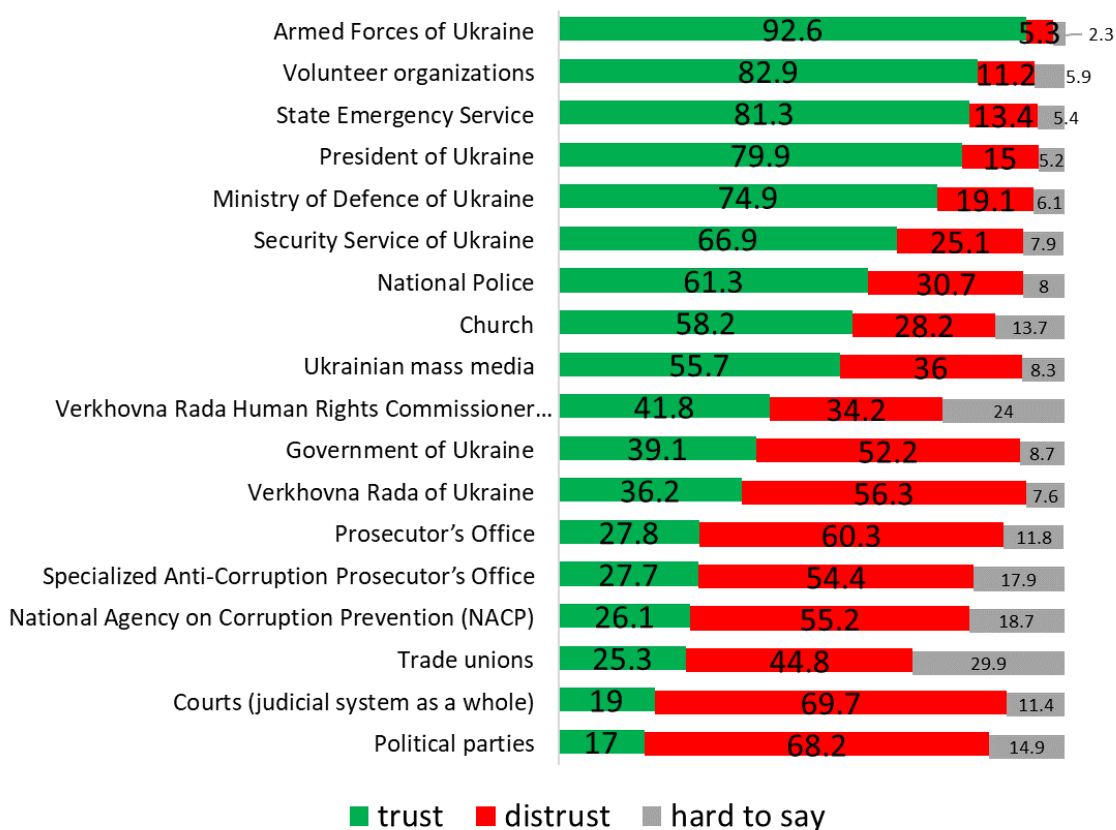
However, society also expresses distrust in key institutions responsible for implementing reforms and carrying out effective economic and social protection policies. People in Ukraine tend to distrust courts (the judicial system as a whole, distrusted by 70%), political parties (68%), the state apparatus (officials) (67%), the Prosecutor's Office (60%), the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (56%), the National Agency on Corruption Prevention (NACP) (55%), the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU) (54.5%), the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office (54%), commercial banks (54%), and the Government of Ukraine (52%).

The results of the surveys indicate that Ukrainian society should simultaneously combat both the external enemy represented by Russian forces and direct efforts towards resolving internal conflicts. This includes implementing measures with the potential for increasing trust in judicial and law enforcement authorities. Distrust in judicial institutions can be considered part of the overall trust in the justice system, which in turn affects confidence in the state's ability to function effectively. Additionally, if people lack faith in fair trials and judicial processes, they may resort to other methods of conflict resolution, such as vigilantism. Given the prevalence of firearms and high incidence of PTSD in the population, such actions can have deadly consequences.

Figure 1. Citizen Trust in Social Institutions¹

¹ "Citizens' Assessment of the Situation in the Country, Trust in Social Institutions, Politicians, Officials and Public Figures, Attitude to Certain Initiatives of the Authorities (July, 2023)." Razumkov Centre, July 27, 2023.

To what extent do you trust the following social institutes?



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<https://razumkov.org.ua/en/sociology/press-releases/citizens-assessment-of-the-situation-in-the-country-trust-in-social-institutions-politicians-officials-and-public-figures-attitude-to-certain-initiatives-of-the-authorities-july-2023>