

# Results of 23 Focus Groups, Ukraine, January 2015

NDI Ukraine

# Strengths & Limitations of Focus Groups

- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) explore “why” questions
  - They get at the source of opinion
  - They also allow respondents to interact and to show tensions and points of agreement across groups
- FGDs are not statistically representative of the population and NDI’s methodology specifically focused on certain population groups
- All social research methods have their biases. Some things to keep in mind when interpreting focus group results
  - Those who come to focus groups may be more outspoken and willing to share their opinions
  - Within groups some who have stronger opinion may share their opinion more forcefully – though this can partially be offset by skilled moderation
  - Because they are speaking in a group setting, respondents may respond differently than if they were responding individually
  - In the guides we used, there were several written tests in which participants were responding individually
  - Given the location of our groups they will not be indicative of rural perceptions to the extent they vary from urban opinions

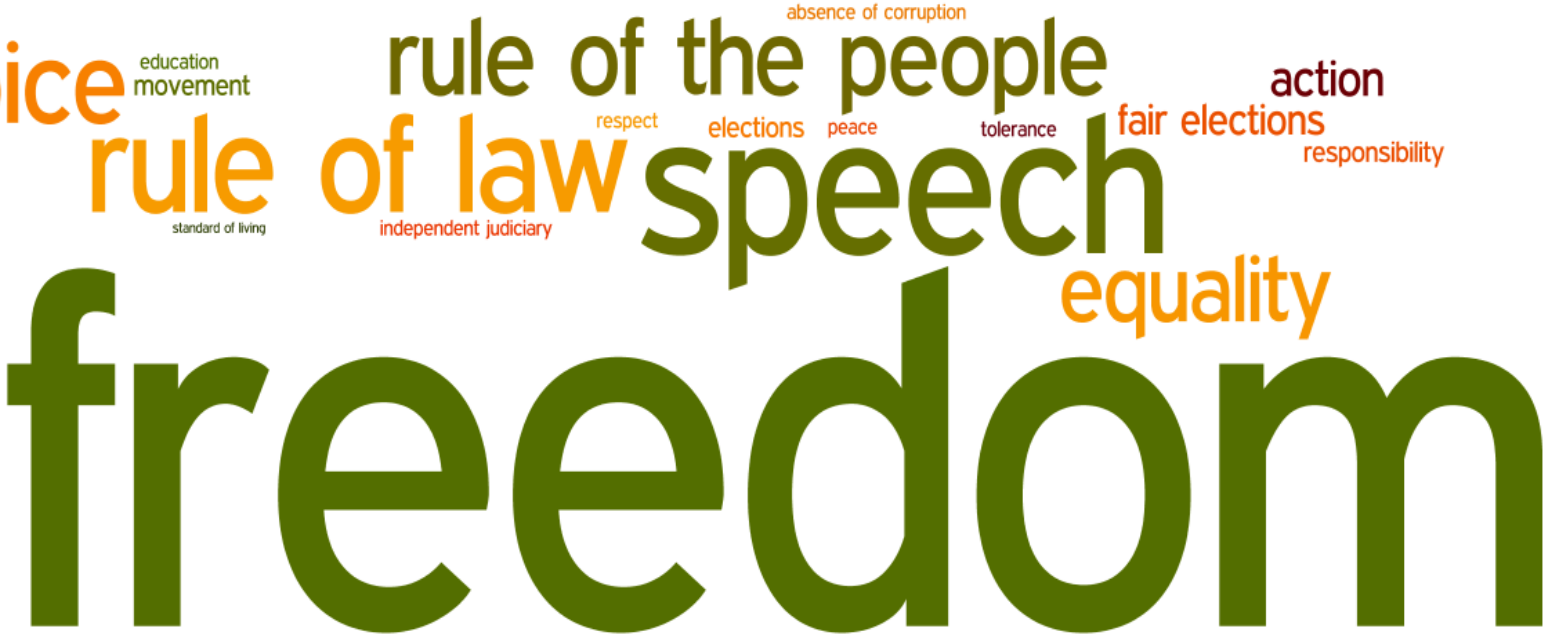
# Methodology – Focus Groups

- 23 focus groups were conducted, 13-23 January 2015, with a total of 224 participants
- Chernihiv, Kyiv, Lviv, Odessa & Kharkiv
- Each group was selected based on age, gender and former voting behaviour (participation/abstention and consistency/switching)
- The principle goals of the focus groups were to better understand the choices made by voters and non-voters in the elections of May and October 2014 and assess opportunities for parties to develop stronger relationships with their supporters
- Some results are shown as word clouds
  - Words and terms were extracted from the transcripts (all groups)
  - The frequency with which a word or term was used is reflected in its size on the page
  - As indicated on the relevant slides, some are the result of individual written tests, the rest are the result of group discussions

# Democracy

- Freedom of speech is the first thing mentioned in almost all the groups when they are asked what they associate with democracy
- Very few negative associations with democracy in any of the groups
- Democracy is associated with:
  - Freedom of speech/choice/action, equality under the law, free elections, order, structure, respect, representation, rulers as the servants of people, not their masters

# Democracy Word Cloud



# Democracy Quotes

- *Freedom of speech; respect for other people*  
~ R2, Nanny, Female, Odessa
- *Tolerance*  
~ R6, Teacher, Female, Odessa
- *Respect for other opinions*  
~ R3, Student, Female, Odessa
- *Strong will. In order to be democratic, you need to be strong, confident and well-educated person.*  
~ R4, Financial manager, Female, Odessa
- *Freedom of speech; power of people; rule of law.*  
~ R9, Unemployed, Male, 54, Lviv
- *People should have real power – they should be able to aim at any branch of power, possibility of recall of every leader at every level.*  
~ R1, Pensioner, Male, 62, Lviv
- *Social justice*  
~ R5, Sales manager, Male, 30, Lviv

# Is Ukraine a Democracy Today?

- Most say Ukraine is a partial democracy or becoming a democracy but with some way to go
  - Very few reject democracy as a goal for the country
  - Ukraine's democracy is often viewed as situational
    - If the comparison is with Russia or Belarus, then Ukrainians see themselves as democratic – if with the rest of Europe then less so
    - Freedom of speech is highlighted as the piece of the democratic process that is most present in Ukraine already
- Some key issues, which are important symbols of democratic progress, like cancelling MPs immunities, emerged in almost all groups

# Is Ukraine a democracy today?

## Quotes

- Comparisons

- *We have freedom of speech. In comparison with [some] other countries, we are doing fine.*

~ R7, Sales manager, Female, 30, Kiev

- *Compared with some other countries, like Belarus and Russia, we do have a democracy.*

~ R2, Company Director, Male, 48, Lviv

- Paper/Partial democracy

- *Democracy is at the stage of birth and the state shows that we have democracy. If you look at TV-shows , it seems that we have seedlings of democracy...*

~ R4, Teacher, Male, 56, Lviv

- *We are getting closer to democracy now and society gets more united, but the authorities are not doing what they promised.*

~ R3, Call center employee, Female, 34, Lviv

- *We have the illusion of it. When I go to the doctor I have to bribe him. We make our choices, but for our choices we have to pay bribes.*

~ R10, Beautician, Female, 39, Kharkiv

- *We do have elections , but the choice we make does not make a difference.*

~ R9, Maintenance staff at automobile sales center, Female, 52, Kharkiv

- *There are some attempts to establish democracy, but it is only at the stage of birth.*

~ R4, Pensioner, Female, 62, Kiev



# Freedom of Speech - Quotes

- Freedom of Speech

- *Partially we have freedom of speech, but people say things quietly.*

- ~ R7, Cab call center operator, Female, Odessa

- *We have only freedom of speech and nothing else.*

- ~ R10, Unemployed, Male, 35, Chernihiv

- *We have limited freedom of speech.*

- ~ R10, Manager, Female, 37, Kiev

- *There is only an illusion of freedom of speech.*

- ~ R2, Company Director, Male, 48, Lviv

- *The freedom of speech is very vital. Because if you cannot speak openly, it is a real issue.*

- ~ R7, Administrator, Female, 26, Kyiv

# Political Parties

- Party affiliation is weak but demand for parties that perform in new ways is very strong. This issue unites Ukrainians with very different voting histories.
  - Respondents in all groups were able to articulate how they would like their political parties to operate
- Ideal political parties
  - Have a coherent common goal/values
  - Represent public, not private, interests
  - Report back to voters regularly on implementation of their programs
  - Interact with voters in local meetings
  - Maintain networks of offices where people can approach them directly between elections
  - Have a team, not just a leader, and select candidates without questionable backgrounds
  - Possess leaders who are professional, speak well, have a clean background and demonstrate integrity
  - Are open to recruit anyone as a member and offer opportunities for their activists to rise within the party ranks

# Ideal Political Parties - Quotes

- Representative party
  - *A group of people united by common goals who are struggling to implement their ideas.* ~ R6, Housewife, Female, 56, Kharkiv
  - *A group of people who have common vision. They should also have a common objective.* R5, Nurse, Female, Chernihiv
  - *There should be law which makes the party accountable. If the party does not follow its program, it should be dissolved.* ~ R10, Beautician, Female, 39, Kharkiv
  - *They should have a patriotic spirit – that's the first thing.* ~ R5, Sales manager, Male, 30, Lviv
- Leader Honesty
  - *Candidates should go through a lie detector. If they fail the test, we will not vote for them.* ~ R2, Company Director, Male, 48, Lviv
  - *Specialists and experienced candidates should go into politics. They should not be motivated financially, but follow altruistic goals.* ~ R10, Beautician, Female, 39, Kharkiv
- Membership and Service
  - *It is possible to join the party.* ~ R8, Male, Realtor, 47, Odessa
  - *It serves the people not the leader.* ~ R6, Lawyer, Male, Kyiv
  - *[Parties] should be created from the lowest level and financed from membership fees* ~ R6, Web programmer, Male, 40, Lviv

# Ideal Parties – Interaction with Voters

- *There should be web pages where the voters can see whatever positions MPs are taking and whether each issue is resolved. I should get a quarterly report on what was done for my district so that I can see what each MP has done during some period of time.*  
~ R10, Beautician, Female, 39, Kharkiv
- *They should make reports once a quarter.*  
~ R3, Private entrepreneur in restaurant business, Male, Kyiv
- *Report twice a year...*  
~ R10, Pensioner, Female, 65, Chernihiv
- *They should report to people as often as possible, not forget what they have promised*  
~ R5, Pensioner, Female, 55, Kiev
- *We voted for them, they got into the Parliament, and before the next elections they should come with a report this is what we did this is what we could not do.*  
~ R5, Teacher, Female, 33, Odessa
- *They should be accountable and make reports.*  
~ R1, Technical worker, Female, Odessa
- *Parties should meet their constituents. The draft laws which the party devises should be synchronized with peoples' demands. Parties should seek peoples' opinions on particular issues. There should be some kind of explanation of the laws that are adopted as well. It should be [done via] press conferences or social media or via TV channels. Just explaining why they are voting the way they do. Before adopting a law people should have a chance to see the draft law and during the preliminary stage they could suggest some amendments.*  
~ R6, Web-developer, Male, 34, Kharkiv

# Party Finance

- Respondents were asked how they thought parties should be financed in Ukraine. They were given three models to discuss. Each one was based on a different source of funds:
  1. Government
  2. Big business
  3. Large numbers of small donors
- Respondents engaged in lively debates on this issue, often coming to a compromise that there should be a hybrid financing system (based on more than one of the models discussed), coupled with much tougher legal provisions on transparency
  - Many agreed that small donor financing would be good in principle (irrespective of voting history)
  - The possibility that small donor financing is viable was bolstered by the experience of broad-based fundraising for protests prior to the end of the former regime and to the war effort since then
- However, barriers remain:
  - The largest barrier to contributing is a lack of belief that parties represent the interests of ordinary people
  - Perceptual barriers to this type of participation are high and it is likely that changing the status quo will require not only a new legal framework but some level of state support (possibly in the form of free air time) within a hybrid system and caps on campaign expenditure to take account of public hostility to large sums being spent on election campaigns
  - Perceptual barriers will be broken down more quickly if parties report back to citizens systematically, redefine the meaning of party membership and demonstrate through their actions that they are in touch with people's concerns
- Many respondents were able to set out conditions under which they would be willing to make small donations to the party of their choice. These included:
  - Transparency – knowing how the money is spent
  - Believing the party represents their interests
  - Feeling more closely connected to the party of their choice through regular 2-way communication
- Other obstacles to small contributions included:
  - Membership fees being associated with the Communist party during the Soviet era
  - Rising levels of economic hardship

# Party Finance: Quotes

- Pro state financing

- *State financing it is transparent and it does not give advantages to certain parties.* ~ R9, Unemployed, Male, 54, Lviv
- *State should create equal conditions for all parties. It means there should be party public financing, contrary to political system financed by oligarchs.* ~ R10, Female, Pensioner, 63, Chernihiv
- *Only state financing allows parties to be independent and work for people.* ~ R2, Retired, Female, 55, Odessa

- Exploring the issue

- *State financing during the campaign period to cover the costs of advertisement, PR, etc., and small donors financing in between the election should exist...* ~ R1, Male, Lawyer, 44, Odessa
- *I disagree [with big business funding] because the party is like a pocket party. [If] each one has their own party, where is the justice ?* ~ R4, Safety engineer, Female, 35, Kiev

- Support for small donor financing

- *If people finance the party, they should have more possibilities and rights to control where these monies go, and they should be able to influence the decision-making process in the party. Those who finance the party have the most leverage on party decision-making, and they could make the party leadership more accountable. Also, in the case of state financing, I don't want my tax payments to support any parties.* ~ R6, Web-developer, Male, 34, Kharkiv
- *If you give a small amount of money it is not complicated, but when there are a lot of members nobody feels too much of an obligation and the party will develop well.* ~ R1, Pensioner, Male, 62, Lviv
- *If the party looks like a labor union – to deal with issues, if you have them – then I am ready .* ~ R8, Unemployed, Female, 28, Kharkiv
- *State financing is not possible ... because the huge amount of money needed is [just] too much. The best would be a combination of state financing and small donors.* ~ R1, Pensioner, Male, 62, Lviv

# Volunteering

- Volunteering in politics is seen as a strange concept to many, and respondents generally don't see the current environment as one in which they would volunteer for a political party
  - Respondents generally associate “volunteering” in politics with earning some income
- Nevertheless, respondents are able to articulate under what circumstances they would be willing to volunteer without payment and what they would be willing to do:
  - Circumstances
    - Shared ideology
    - Transparency
    - Respect
  - Activities
    - Pamphleting
    - Door to door campaigning
    - Election observation
    - Driving



# Volunteering: Quotes

- *Mainly there are no volunteers because we do not trust party activities.*
  - ~ R1, Technical worker, Female, Odessa
- *If the parties do something other than advertise...*
  - ~ R2, Law student, Male, 20, Kharkiv
- *The condition to support the party is if they help people.*
  - ~ R2, Librarian, Female, 25, Kyiv
- *If they explain it to me clearly what the objective is, then why not? There should be a clear reason...The question is if the parties are doing something for Kharkiv.*
  - ~ R2, Law student, Male, 20, Kharkiv
- *I think that lots of us were members of election commissions. You can say that this was volunteerism since the salaries there are really miserable.*
  - ~ R7, Student, Female, 21, Lviv



# Electoral Process

- A clear majority of respondents across different groups thought that the 2014 parliamentary elections were more credible than the 2012 parliamentary elections
  - The only exceptions were some (not all) former supporters of the Party of Regions, who were disappointed by the events of the past year and thought the 2012 elections were more credible
- Many respondents said that the feeling of the votes being stolen was not so strong and there was less pressure on them to make particular choices in 2014
- However, some did not believe elections should have been held in war time because of the cost and others complained that the campaign was too short to make a meaningful choice

# Electoral Process: Quotes

- *In 2012, there was not even any sense [in going to] vote.*
  - ~ R7, Construction worker, Male, 38, Chernihiv
- *There was lots of election fraud in 2012, including ballot stuffing. That's what I know was happening in my oblast.*
  - ~ R3, Private entrepreneur, Male, 45, Chernihiv
- *I think that elections [2014] should not have been held at all.*
  - ~ R3, Travel company manager, Female, 24, Kiev
- *I think that the elections [2014] were unfair, because the election itself was organized quickly.*
  - ~ R10, Unemployed, Male, 23, Kharkiv
- *I was more inclined to vote in 2012.*
  - ~ R5, Worker (Blue collar), Male, 46, Kharkiv



# Why did you vote?

## Presidential elections 2014 (written test)







# New Parties

- There were mixed feelings about new parties in the groups, as many feel that Ukraine already has too many parties
- On the other hand, breaking into the party space is possible, particularly if a new party is seen to be close to the 'ideal party'
- Any new party would need to have several of the following characteristics in order to succeed:
  - Is deeply credible in terms of reform credentials
  - Has at least some recognized leaders who are seen as having relevant experience and integrity
  - Behaves significantly differently from the current parties, particularly in terms of reporting and interacting with citizens between elections
  - Has a real team
  - Transparent party finance
  - Seen to represent the interests of ordinary people
  - Is open in its relations with its supporters
  - Has a chance of winning office (this could be locally)
- New parties may particularly appeal to abstainers who would like to be more involved but have lost confidence in their current choices

# New Parties: Quotes

- Positive

- *There are new faces in these parties and we want to see changes*  
~ R5, Unemployed, Female, 46, Kharkiv
- *New people have a lot of energy and enthusiasm and they would contribute more.*  
~ R10, Beautician, Female, 39, Kharkiv
- *A new party should be created over years. It should be known not only by the advertisements but people should be telling each other they are helping this person and then it will be a powerful party.*  
~ R5, Teacher, Female, 33, Odessa
- *We need parties with young people with good education, good knowledge of foreign languages and different spheres and when they appear people will vote for them for sure. They will get into the parliament and only then will something change.*  
~ R2, Retired, Female, 55, Odessa
- *Now I have changed my mind and in fact we need new parties but they should be completely different and nothing similar to the ones we had before. They should do concrete actions and actual work. They should represent new people who will be creative.*  
~ R1, Security guard, Female, 27, Kyiv



# Reactions to New Faces and other MPs

- Respondents generally responded well to the arrival of ‘new faces’ in the Parliament
  - Many said the ‘new faces’ have not had a chance to show themselves fully in the parliament yet
  - Many also said that ‘new faces’ are a good tendency, as parliament needs to be renewed by ‘fresh blood’
- The groups were asked about whether civic and media activists, business people and those from the military should enter politics
  - Support for the presence of activists in the parliament was strong in nearly all the groups
  - Opinion about the presence of business people and the military in the parliament was more mixed
  - Those impatient for reform are watching closely but want more information about what individual MPs, and the parliament as a whole, are doing

# Civic to Politics: Quotes

- *Volunteers are great and brave. It is the right thing to do,*  
~ R10, Construction company manager, Male, Chernihiv
- *It is good that they came because they have seen ordinary life. As my mother said, those who are full do not understand those who starve.*  
~ R5, Sales person, Female, 54, Lviv
- *It is good when people come from civic sector they are ready to fulfill their functions in politics. So one can understand this is a highly educated person who can do something. Should be professional.*  
~ R3, Private entrepreneur, Male, 28, Kharkiv
- *I think everybody should come to politics from the civic sector.*  
~ R4, Teacher, Male, 56, Lviv
- *It should be civic activists who really do something...civic people should come but they should have their own opinion and a desire to make changes and to do something. They should be well educated and understand economics.*  
~ R2, Executive Assistant, Female, 30, Kiev
- *This is positive. They are young there is hope for them. What matters is who sponsors them. That is what we need to know.*  
~ R4, Financial manager, Female, Odessa
- *Overall positive. However, I am also concerned they may get spoiled in the parliament.*  
~ R9, Executive assistant, Female, 24, Kyiv

# Local Elections

- While most respondents are aware there are upcoming elections, there is much uncertainty about when they will be held and who they will vote for
  - Most respondents say they need to look at the lists in order to decide
- Many seem more interested in local elections because they feel it impacts them directly
  - Local pride was mentioned in several groups
- Some respondents expressed the idea that local elections are more important nowadays, given the prospect of decentralisation in the context of constitutional reform
- Many respondents raised concerns about the program of the local candidates
  - Need to scrutinize the election program before making choices
  - People are looking for parties that consult them on local priorities and are in touch
  - Candidate selection will be key, as it was in the Parliamentary elections

# Local Elections Quotes

- Candidate selection

- *I do not know anybody who is running for office, especially at the local level.*

~ R6, Student, Male, 20, Kharkiv

- *We will look at the lists.*

~ R8, Pensioner, Male, 58, Chernihiv

- *It is better to know the lists before deciding.*

~ R3, Property Assessor, Female, 27, Lviv

- *Yes – maybe we can change something... we have the right to change something. I would like to think I can choose a candidate who can make decisions locally.*

~ R2, Engineer, Male, 30, Kyiv

- Local pride

- *It is our city we should do something for it. We should vote.*

~ R7, Pensioner, Female, 60, Odessa

- *To raise our district, our city. New shirt (President) and new pants (Parliament), now new shoes (local council) are needed.*

~ R7, Blacksmith, Male, 35, Lviv

- *I would vote for any significant individual who is well known locally (from an NGO). These people can do something from nothing. We need someone with good management skills. We should pick those who are supporting ATO.*

~ R10, Entrepreneur, Female, 42, Kharkiv

# Local Elections Quotes

- Decentralization
  - *Decentralization is an alternative idea to federalization.*  
~ R1, Lawyer, Male, 44, Odessa
- Election program
  - *I would vote, but I need to know their election program first.*  
~ R8, Rehabilitation center educator, Female, 55, Odessa
  - *Need to read and analyze [the election programs].*  
~ R4, Pensioner, Female, 62, Kyiv
- Local improvements
  - *If they [local candidates] repaired roads so that my shoes will not be so dirty, I would vote for this candidate. Seriously.... or do something for my village.*  
~ R5, Seaport director, Male, 41, Odessa