Public Perceptions of Politics and Government

Findings from a June –July 2014 Survey of 1,577 adults over the age of 18 in Moldova

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Methodology

- This survey was designed by IMAS in consultation with Lake Research Partners, and administered by IMAS. The survey was conducted using in-person interviews with professional interviewers. The survey reached a total of 1,577 adults countrywide in Moldova, excluding the region of Transnistria, and was conducted June to July 2014. The margin of error for this poll is +/- 2.5%.

- In interpreting survey results, all sample surveys are subject to possible sampling error—that is, the results of a survey may differ from those that would be obtained if the entire population were interviewed. The size of the sampling error depends upon both the total number of respondents in the survey and the percentage distribution of responses to a particular question. For example, if a response to a given question which all respondents answered was 50%, we could be 95% confident that the true percentage would fall within plus or minus 2.5% of this percentage, or between 47.5% and 52.5%. Of course, the sampling error is greater for subgroups.

- This survey was funded by a grant from USAID. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of either USAID or the United States Government.
Summary of Key Findings
Strategic Summary: The Political Context

- Despite improved perceptions of their country’s European trajectory, Moldovans continue to be pessimistic about the perceived lack of positive change in their country.
  - Similar to the survey in February, only one-quarter of Moldovans believe the country is headed in the right direction and nearly three-quarters are dissatisfied with their quality of life.
  - Additionally, a majority believes their lives have not changed in the past year.

- Economic and political instability continue to dominate Moldovans’ concerns for the future.
  - Fully three-quarters of Moldovans are dissatisfied with the country’s current economic situation, an increase from February. Additionally, Moldovans’ sense of concern regarding their personal economic situations is near-universal.
  - Unemployment, low standard of living, and low wages persist in voters’ minds as major concerns facing the country.
  - Moldovans are critical of the government’s efforts to influence economic growth.
  - Moldovans express dissatisfaction, by margins of 3:1, with the level of information they have regarding the country’s economic situation and security.
  - They also have less confidence in national government than in local government, and tend to seek out help from local authorities and elected officials (mayor or councilors) rather than MPs.

- Compared to previous studies, interest in becoming more involved in politics has increased among younger people and women. Overall, however, these are two groups that tend to participate less in political life than their older, male counterparts.
Strategic Summary: Views of The Players and Parties

- As in February, Moldovans continue to express dissatisfaction with, and a general lack of confidence in, national political and governmental bodies, including political parties, parliament, and the presidency. They express limited confidence in mayors and local councilors.
Strategic Summary: The International Context

• As in February, a plurality of Moldovans believes the association agreement with the EU is a good thing for Moldova, even if they do not necessarily favor an outright alliance.

• On other fronts, however, impressions of the European Union have improved since February, as Moldovans are more open to the benefits of joining the EU.
  – Freedom of movement, respect for order and the rule of law, as well as individual freedoms are particularly appealing for Moldovans.

• At the same time as Moldovans increasingly favor a pro-European foreign policy, they have shifted away from a pro-Russian posture. However, opinions are divided and support has not solidified for one side or the other.

• If Moldovans had to vote today, they would split down the middle between joining the EU and the Eurasian Customs Union.
  – This is a shift from February when support for aligning with Russia was at nearly fifty percent.
Strategic Summary: Engaging the Public

• Voters are split between favoring closer ties to the European Union and Russia. The issue has become more polarizing. It would be prudent for politicians to acknowledge multiple perspectives.

• Moldovans rely on friends and family members when they are discussing politics. Messages that hit all sections of the community are more likely to gain traction in the public consciousness and succeed.

• The individual is considered the most important factor when electing a candidate, perhaps in part due to the negative perceptions Moldovans have of their existing political parties. There is also a desire for more women and youth to participate in politics, but they are generally less enthusiastic about participating than older, male voters.

• When deciding their vote for Parliamentary elections, a plurality of Moldovans are undecided. Furthermore, less than one-third are firmly committed to voting for a particular political party. The dissatisfaction with the status quo means that any party that can credibly seize the mantle of change has the opportunity to make significant gains.
The Political Context

Attitudes on the Direction of the Country, Political Figures, and the National Issue Agenda
Moldovans continue to be more pessimistic than optimistic in their outlook on the future, but a significant number have mixed feelings.

C2. Do you think our country is going in the wrong direction or is going in the right direction?
More than seven-in-ten continue to be dissatisfied with the level of information they have regarding Moldova’s economy and national security.

A1. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the level of information that you have about: a. Economic situation of the country? d. Country security?
Official corruption shares the stage with a range of economic concerns when Moldovans are asked to name the top issues facing the country. When focusing on the challenges facing their families however, economic concerns predominate, especially surrounding poverty, unemployment, and the high cost of living. The top issues have not shifted that much over the last year.

*Each respondent provided their top three choices (in no particular order), which we aggregated for the purposes of these graphs.

C3: What are the top three issues facing our country today?
C4: What are the top three issues facing your family today?
A range of issues emerge when Moldovans focus on their immediate neighborhoods, including road repair, street lighting, sanitation, and water supply.

What are the top three issues facing your (street/block/mahala) today?

- Repairing roads: 46
- Street lighting: 26
- Sanitation services: 22
- Water supply: 15
- Sewage: 10
- Public order: 5
- Gasification: 5
- Poverty: 4
- Unemployment: 4
- Infrastructure: 2
- Heavy traffic: 2
- Lack of education: 2
- Don't know: 21
In order to find a solution to their problems, just over one-quarter of respondents say they have contacted their mayor, slightly fewer have reached out to a local councilor. Virtually no one reports having contacted officials at a higher level—or having contacted the media.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact to Solve Problems</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mayor of locality</td>
<td>65/33</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any local councilor</td>
<td>75/23</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any rayon/municipality councilor</td>
<td>90/6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The media</td>
<td>92/4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any member of Parliament</td>
<td>93/4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President of Rayon/Municipality Council</td>
<td>94/3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO/Civic Organization</td>
<td>95/2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Government minister</td>
<td>96/2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President of the country</td>
<td>100/2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

G2: In order to find a solution for your problems, to obtain an advice, have you contacted any of the following types of people, in the last 6 months …?
Other than the church, and to a much lesser degree the media, most institutions inspire relatively little confidence. Moldovans are much more likely to place trust in their local government than other levels of government. Moldovans express the least confidence in political parties and parliament.

Q8: I will now read the names of some institutions. Please tell me how much confidence do you have in each of them?
Moldovans tend to believe that most basic democratic and social principles are accorded little respect in their country, including access to a living wage, employment opportunities, the provision of basic needs, and the will of the majority. Access to education and the freedom to criticize the government are seen as commanding at least some respect. Only one-third of Moldovans believe free and fair elections are respected.

D1: People think that democracy means several things. To what extent do the following things are respected in Moldova?
Three-quarters or more of Moldovans believe that all the democratic and social principles described are important, in contrast to the low level of respect accorded those principles. Access to a living wage, employment opportunities, the provision of basic needs, and access to education for all are the most highly prioritized principles.

### Importance of democratic and Social Principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access to a living wage</th>
<th>Very/Quite Important: 90</th>
<th>Not at all/Not so important: 69</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to basic needs for everyone</td>
<td>Very/Quite Important: 90</td>
<td>Not at all/Not so important: 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to employment for everyone</td>
<td>Very/Quite Important: 90</td>
<td>Not at all/Not so important: 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to education for everyone</td>
<td>Very/Quite Important: 89</td>
<td>Not at all/Not so important: 62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free and fair elections</td>
<td>Very/Quite Important: 88</td>
<td>Not at all/Not so important: 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom to establish a business</td>
<td>Very/Quite Important: 85</td>
<td>Not at all/Not so important: 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will of majority</td>
<td>Very/Quite Important: 81</td>
<td>Not at all/Not so important: 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom for anyone to criticize the government</td>
<td>Very/Quite Important: 74</td>
<td>Not at all/Not so important: 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for the rights of minorities (ethnic, sexual, etc.)</td>
<td>Very/Quite Important: 59</td>
<td>Not at all/Not so important: 27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D2: How important you think these various aspects of Democracy are for future of Moldova?
Less than one-third of respondents are firmly committed to voting for a particular party. This dynamic underscores the potential for dramatic movement should a single leader or party seize the mantle of change.

Q9b: How decided are you to vote for a particular political party?
The Economic Context

Attitudes on Living Standards and Key Economic Figures
Moldovans’ dissatisfaction with their standard of living remains pronounced, but has actually declined somewhat over the past year.

C5: How satisfied or dissatisfied with the way you live?

June 2014

- Satisfied: 28
- Not Satisfied: 71

February 2014

- Satisfied: 22
- Not Satisfied: 77

March 2013

- Satisfied: 19
- Not Satisfied: 80
Economic anxiety is prominent and exists on multiple levels. Majorities of Moldovans are worried about the economic situation globally and nationally, but they are especially concerned about financial conditions within their own households.

E2. How worried are you about the current situation in each of the following?

- World Economic Situation
  - Not so much/not at all: 36%
  - A lot/quite worried: 55%

- Economic Situation of Moldova
  - Not so much/not at all: 16%
  - A lot/quite worried: 78%

- Household Financial Situation
  - Not so much/not at all: 11%
  - A lot/quite worried: 85%
Half of Moldovans believe that their lives are largely the same as they were a year ago. However, those who perceive a change say things have deteriorated rather than improved, and by more than a 2:1 margin.

C6: How your life is now compared to a year ago?
When reviewing institutions’ perceived contributions to economic growth, nearly half of respondents believe the European Union contributes at least some degree to economic development in Moldova, the only institution to receive a net-positive rating on this issue. In comparison, a majority says the Moldovan government, Moldovan banks, and the President do not contribute significantly to the country’s economic development. Respondents are more divided on the role played by the Russian Federation.

E3. To what extent do you think each of the following local actors contribute to the economic development of the Republic of Moldova?
The International Environment

Moldovans’ perceptions of the European Union, Russia, and their place in the world
As in February of this year, nearly half of Moldovans believe the Association Agreement with the EU is beneficial for the country. Since that time the number who perceive it will have a negative outcome has declined by nearly ten points.

A3: Do you think the Association Agreement with the EU is rather … ?
The pro-Europe sentiment has changed little over the past months while the pro-Russia sentiment has deteriorated noticeably. Across the board, regardless of gender or age, Moldovans have moved away from a pro-Russia foreign policy, but not necessarily toward a pro-Europe policy. They have shifted toward preferring a dual approach.

A4: What should be the foreign policy orientation of the Moldovan leadership?
Similar pluralities of voters would support referendums for EU integration and for a Eurasian Customs Union. By a 2:1 margin, Moldovans oppose a NATO referendum.

A5: If next Sunday will be a referendum (you were asked to vote) on ... you vote for or against?

- EU Integration of Republic of Moldova: 47% for, 27% against, 14% don't know
- Eurasian Customs Union: 47% for, 25% against, 14% don't know
- NATO: 39% for, 18% against, 21% don't know
Vote FOR – Key Subgroups

**EU INTEGRATION (47%)**
- Income 6,000+ lei (70%)
- College educated (59%)
- Municipality residents <45 (59%)
- Income 3,000-6,000 lei (56%)
- Employed (53%)
- Rural residents 45+ (52%)

**EURASIAN CUSTOMS UNION (47%)**
- City residents <14,000 inhabitants (57%)
- Under 45 earning <1,000 lei (56%)
- Men earning <1,000 lei (55%)
- High school or less education (53%)

**NATO (18%)**
- College educated men (31%)
- Income 6,000+ lei (29%)
- Municipality residents (27%)
- Never married (24%)
- Employed <45 (23%)

Vote AGAINST – Key Subgroups

**EU INTEGRATION (27%)**
- City residents 14,000+ inhabitants (37%)
- Municipality residents 45+ (37%)
- Divorced (35%) or Widowed (34%)
- Age 65+ (34%) or Men 45+ (34%)
- Unemployed men (33%)
- High school or less education (32%)

**EURASIAN CUSTOMS UNIONS (25%)**
- Income 6,000+ lei (41%)
- Employed 45+ (33%)
- College educated (32%)
- Rural residents 45+ (31%)
- Married 45+ (30%) or Divorced (30%)

**NATO (39%)**
- City residents 14,000+ inhabitants (49%)
- Married men (45%) or Widowed (49%)
- Men 45+ (45%)
- Men earning <1,000 lei (44%) or 1,000-3,000 lei (44%)
Moldovans believe there are numerous positive associations with joining the EU. Freedom of movement, respect for order and the rule of law, as well as individual freedoms are reasons Moldovans favor the EU. Respect for minorities’ rights is much less appealing.

A8: What appeals to you in the European Union?
Moldovans are less inclined to believe these characteristics are reasons to reject the EU. Although, respect for minorities rights does spike a more negative reaction.

A8. What appeals to you in the European Union?
A9 What causes the rejection of the European Union?
Civic Participation

Moldovans' Perceptions of their Ability to Effect Political Change
Interest in politics has slipped since the survey in February, with less than one-quarter expressing a desire to be involved. Although, Moldovans do indicate some interest in talking to a representative of a political party in the coming months.

B1: Please indicate to what extent are you interested in politics?
B2: In the last 12 months, have you participated in any political meeting? (congress party meeting, meeting organized by any party, etc.)?
B3: In the next 6 months you want to talk to any representative of a political party?
Interest in politics has decreased among both men and women, with men more likely to have lost interest since the previous survey.

### Interest in Politics

**Among Men**
- Very Much: 9%
- Much: 16%
- Neutral: 27%
- A Little: 29%
- Not At All: 18%

**February 2014 Among Men:**
- 8% Very, 26% Much, 30% Neutral, 23% A Little, 12% Not at All

**Among Women**
- Very Much: 4%
- Much: 16%
- Neutral: 30%
- A Little: 31%
- Not At All: 18%

**February 2014 Among Women:**
- 5% Very, 20% Much, 32% Neutral, 26% A Little, 16% Not at All

B1: Please indicate to what extent are you interested in politics?
Similar to the previous surveys, Moldovans are more likely to vote in both local and parliamentary elections than they are to become more politically involved.

**Political Involvement During Last 5 Years**

- I voted in parliamentary elections: 80/83
- I voted in local elections: 79/84
- I attended a demonstration/political rally: 15
- I have contacted elected officials and/or their offices: 11
- I have done volunteer work for a political party: 8
- I have volunteered for a civic group, or NGO: 8
- I have run as a candidate in the local election campaign: 4
- I have run as a candidate in the parliamentary election campaign: 1

**T1:** What are the types of activities you have been involved in the last 5 years?
By a margin of 2:1, Moldovans are more likely to speak to their friends and family about problems and politics than they are to a local councilor. They are far less likely to speak to an MP or attend meetings.

T2: What are the types of activities you have been involved in the last 3 months?
Moldovans continue to believe the most important factor in local elections is the individual candidate. Since February, there is an increased interest among the public for young people as well as women to become more involved in politics.

List of Statements on Political Life in Moldova

G3: I will now read you a list of statements and you tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with them ...

Past Surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>DK/NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feb 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The most important factor at local elections is the candidate (person)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24/64</td>
<td>24/64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There should be more young people in politics, even if they do not have the necessary experience</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31/59</td>
<td>30/60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There should be more young people in politics, even if they do not have the necessary experience</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33/55</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The party position matters most in Parliamentary elections</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28/57</td>
<td>23/63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The list of candidates most in Parliamentary elections</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34/52</td>
<td>30/56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government is the party which the candidate is supported by the central authorities</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40/48</td>
<td>34/52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government is located in the district and works closely with the community</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33/42</td>
<td>33/48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is acceptable for a member of Parliament to switch from one party to another</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>48/40</td>
<td>49/42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is acceptable for a member of Parliament to switch from a party to another</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>59/28</td>
<td>54/33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is acceptable for a member of Parliament to switch from one party to another</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>61/26</td>
<td>51/35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>