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NORTH MACEDONIA
CITIZENS REGISTER CONCERNS OVER DEMOCRACY, EUROPEAN
INTEGRATION, ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Challenges include COVID-19, trust in government, and foreign illiberal influence

SKOPJE, August 12 - A wide cross-section of citizens of North Macedonia (64%) believes that the country is moving in the wrong direction.

In the latest National Democratic Institute (NDI) public opinion research, citizens in North Macedonia were surveyed on topics related to democracy, governance, and impressions on COVID-19, geopolitics, and disinformation.

A slight majority in North Macedonia (52%) see regression in democracy. Fifty-eight (58) percent view democracy as the preferred system of government but are skeptical that foundational principles such as equality under the law are achievable. Fifty-six (56) percent of respondents prioritize quality of life over democratic standards. Paradoxically, 72% embrace positive views of both democratic governance and “strong-hand” leadership.

The economy/job prospects (37%) plus healthcare/COVID-19 (21%) remain top concerns for survey respondents, while lack of trust in the judiciary (67%) and the public prosecutor (63%) persists.

“Citizens lack trust in politicians with 53% of respondents expressing they trust ‘no one’ and look for leadership to grow the economy, and improve healthcare” said Robert Scott Heaslet, NDI’s North Macedonia Director, adding, *“concerns about political impunity and lagging EU accession contribute to the poor perceptions about the country’s prospects and democratic capacities.”*

Support for the European Union has weakened in North Macedonia. Although 67 percent of respondents signaled they would vote for EU membership, perceptions about the EU are strained, with 19% signaling they oppose EU membership - up from 10% in 2018.

Support for the NATO alliance remains strong at 63 percent (64% in 2018), while opposition to the military alliance has grown to 24%, a nine percent increase from 2018.

Across the board, Turkey, Russia, United States and China increased favorability among respondents up from 2018 favorability ratings. Turkey and Russia have the highest favorability rises, presently at 52% and 48% respectively, up from 42% and 32%. Favorability ratings of the United States (43%) and China (38%) are lower.



On COVID-19, citizens' surveyed remain personally concerned about COVID-19. A significant majority of the respondents are "a lot" worried about the COVID-19 pandemic, and the government receives poor marks on COVID-19 restriction policies and communications, although government COVID-19 data is trusted.

Eighty-seven (87) percent of citizens' surveyed believe there is disinformation in the media. Although 68% of those surveyed find social media somewhat trusted, and there is a reliance on friends, family, and colleagues for information. Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are predominantly the preferred platforms for information, but respondents prefer to discuss politics and news in-person rather than online.

The research was commissioned by NDI and fielded in North Macedonia by Ipsos in March-April 2021 with a representative sample (n=2410) and a margin of error +/-2% through CAPI and CAWI telephone and online interviews. The research was funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development. Findings do not necessarily reflect the views of NDI, USAID or the U.S. Government.

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