

Belarus National Poll 2019: Public Opinion Does Not Change

Introduction

This memo presents initial findings from a national public opinion poll conducted by MIA Research in August-September 2019 with the representative sample size of 1 507 respondents and margin of error \pm 3%. The interviews were face-to-face. The polling was conducted based on a questionnaire that was used in August 2018, which allows drawing comparisons between answers to most of the questions. The survey was commissioned by Pact under the USAID/BRAMA Activity.

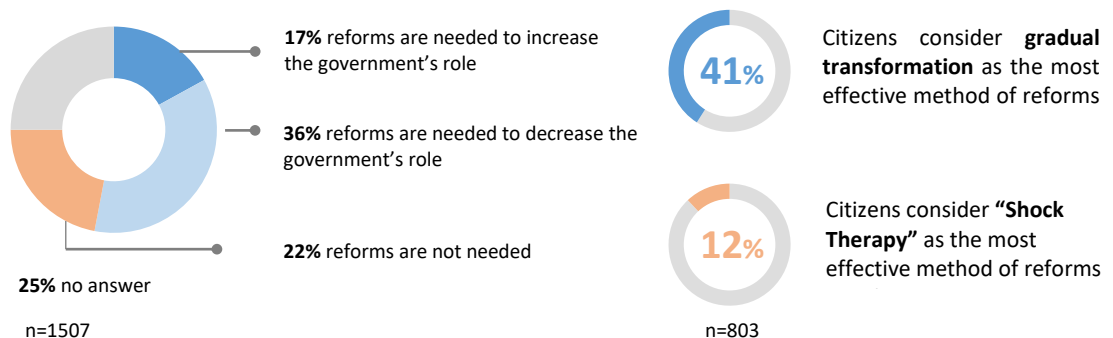
Key Findings

Belarusians' understanding of their role vis-à-vis the state or attitudes towards reforms remain virtually the same. Similar to last year's results, overwhelming majority of respondents (roughly 80%) do not believe that their decisions or actions can influence the government on local or national levels. 36% of Belarusians (compared to last year's 32%) believe the country needs reforms to decrease the role of the state, while the number of those who would prefer radical reforms has decreased from 19% to 12%. Economy, healthcare and pension system remain to be priority reform areas.

Diagram #1: Influence of personal choice and citizen behavior (n=1507)

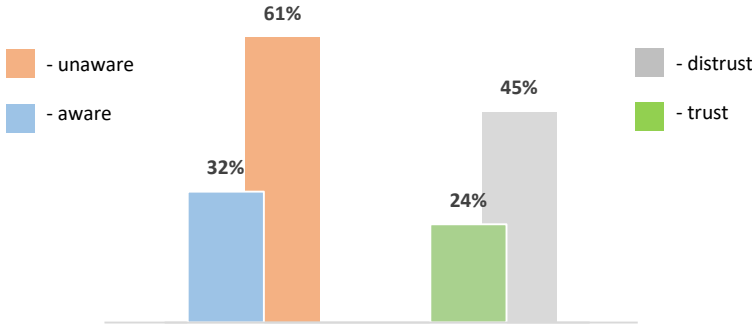


Diagram #2: Citizens' demand for reforms



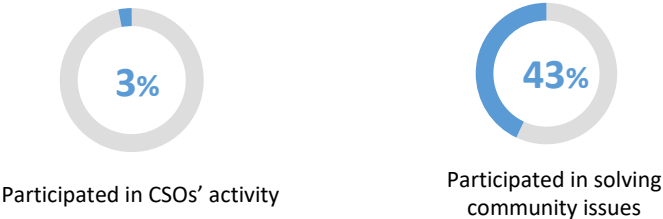
Awareness of NGOs remains low, which renders the issue of trust to NGOs hardly relevant. 61% of Belarusians said they were not aware of activities of any non-governmental organizations (68% said they were not aware last year). However, when offered more specific questions about activities of NGOs, the level of unawareness is much higher. For example, 81% of Belarusians are unaware of any civic education NGOs and 78% know nothing about human rights defenders. These percentages are similar across all civil society sectors. Such poor awareness about NGOs’ activities affects level of citizens’ trust to civil society organizations.

Diagram #3: Citizens’ awareness of and trust to CSOs (n=1507)



Poor awareness of NGOs continues to affect the level of civic participation. Only 3% of Belarusians took part in NGO activities in 2019, which is the same level of participation as recorded last year. More than half of those who did not participate explained their inaction by poor awareness of opportunities to participate. At the same time, 10% of Belarusians took part in self-organized civic action, which – similar to last year – suggests that people are more likely to participate in informal initiatives rather than in activities of civic institutions. The level of participation on the community level is traditionally higher.

Diagram #4: Citizens’ participation (n=1507)



Media literacy of Belarusians remains low. Whereas the majority of respondents indicate they face disinformation and propaganda (56%) in the media, 71% are not really concerned that they may be recipients of fake information, and only 9% are always verifying the news.

Diagram #5: Citizens' perception of disinformation in mass media (n=1507)

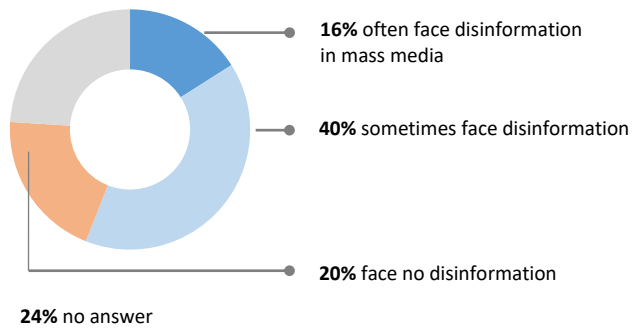
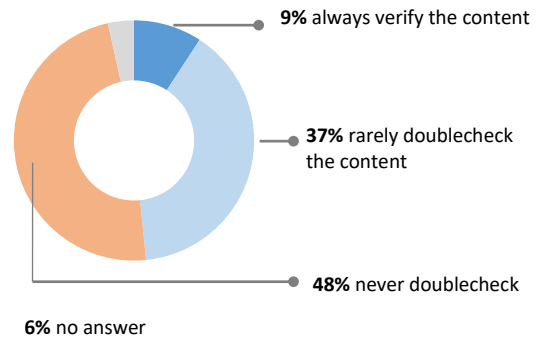
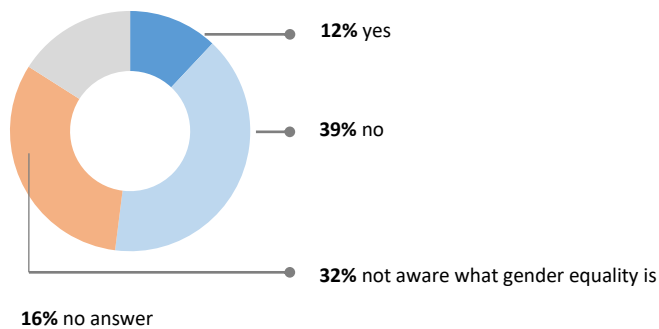


Diagram #6: Citizens' critical attitude to content they receive (n=1507)



Gender inequality is not considered a problem, while many Belarusians don't understand the issue. 12% of respondents consider that gender inequality is an actual problem in Belarus and 5% personally faced the issue. 39% do not believe this is a problem and 32% do not understand the question.

Diagram #7: Do you think gender inequality is an actual issue in Belarus (n=1507)



Belarusians want to live in an independent state. 43% of Belarusians prefer to live in an independent state rather than uniting with Russia (22%) or the EU (18%). Russia, China and Ukraine are viewed as the friendliest countries, while the US is considered the most unfriendly. Threats of Russian military aggression or informational influence are ranked at the bottom of the list of external threats to Belarus.

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