

ICPS newsletter[®]

“People’s Voice” vets public services from local governments

During the last decade, improving the quality of municipal services and combating corruption have continued to be urgent problems for Ukrainians. International experience shows that public support for reforms is critical. It is important to carry out opinion polls to effectively and systematically learn what voters think about the quality of municipal services and corruption. Throughout Fall 2007, the “People’s Voice” project presented the results of a survey that was carried out in May 2007 in the six participating cities and towns: Alchevsk, Chernihiv, Kolomyia, Komsomolsk, Lutsk, and Makiyivka. The summary of the results revealed that, among the main services, those related to residential services and roadways in urban areas require improvements the most

How we did this survey

This survey regarding satisfaction among urban residents with the quality of municipal services was carried out by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology from April to August 2007 for “People’s Voice.”

The poll used individual interviews of a random, multi-stage sampling. The questionnaire used for this study contained sections on the residential services sector, roadways, public transport, the cleanliness and overall appearance of cities and towns, parks and green areas, the education system, social services, public safety, and contacts with local governments. It also included questions about the activity of community organizations and the “People’s Voice” project in the given town or city.

The main objectives of this survey were: to evaluate the quality of services received by local residents, public opinion on possible ways to improve poor services, and an evaluation by local residents of changes that took place in specific services, compared to 2004, when a similar survey was carried out at the beginning of this project.

Residential services: Stronger public oversight needed

The highest number of local residents dissatisfied with residential services, 82.4%, was in Makiyivka. The number of residents that are not satisfied with the quality of residential services in Alchevsk was somewhat more than half at 56.7%. The current situation seems to be more-or-less acceptable to nearly half of Lutsk residents at 48.8%, Kolomyia at 50.3% and Chernihiv at

52.6%. The biggest number of local residents satisfied with the quality of residential services in their town was in Komsomolsk, fully 72.6% of those polled.

The area of the residential services that received the lowest marks from residents in all the six cities and towns was the maintenance of buildings and grounds. Alchevsk residents gave mainly negative marks to central heating and Lutsk residents to garbage removal. In Makiyivka, the lowest marks were given to water supplies, central heating and garbage removal.

Residents of all six cities and towns said that the main way to improve residential services was to strengthen public oversight of the residential services bureaus, known as ZhEKs in Ukrainian. Between 31% and 53.9% of respondents mentioned this.

Water supplies: Makiyivka is the worst

The problem of cold water supply has been resolved most effectively in Chernihiv, Komsomolsk, Alchevsk and Lutsk where between 84.9% and 95.7% of residents have unlimited access to water, while only 0.3–3.0% do not have cold running water at all.

The worst situation is in Makiyivka: only 10.4% of residents receive cold water without any restrictions, while 83% receive cold running water only during certain hours. The situation is also difficult in Kolomyia, where 31.8% of respondents, mostly those in private houses, do not have centralized water.

The best hot water supply was in Komsomolsk, where 79.6% of those polled had hot running

By the way...

Over 16–19 November, ICPS analyst Natalia Shapovalova attended a conference in Bulgaria called “Ukraine’s Path to the EU and NATO and Bulgaria’s Experience” organized by the Institute for Euro–Atlantic Cooperation and the Bulgarian Public Policy School.

Over 12–13 November, ICPS Director Volodymyr Nikitin participated in a two-day All–Ukrainian conference called “Public Policy to Facilitate the Development of Civil Society.”

water thanks to the efforts of the municipal utility. The situation is the worst in Makiyivka and Alchevsk, where there is no centralized hot water at all.

The lowest marks for the efforts of local governments in resolving water supply problems were given to Makiyivka, while the highest went to Komsomolsk and Lutsk.

Roads are a major problem for partner cities

In the course of this survey, sociologists saw that residents of each of the surveyed cities and towns think that one of the biggest problems is the state of their roads. From a low of 56.9% of respondents in Alchevsk to a high of 90.4% in Makiyivka said that the state of local roads was bad. The highest number of positive marks came in Komsomolsk, where 41.6% think that municipal roadways are in good condition.

In each city or town, the biggest drawback in municipal roadways was the extreme number of potholes. This problem was mentioned by 93.3% in Makiyivka, 94.6% in Kolomyia and 98.1% in Lutsk. The unsatisfactory state of roadways is primarily due to the lack of financial resources for a complete overhaul of the road surface.

Having given low marks to the quality of the road surface, respondents gave very low marks to the efforts of local governments to resolve this problem, too. Moreover, marks fully corresponded to overall evaluations of the roadways in the given city or town.

Cleanliness: the situation's better, but not everywhere

The survey showed that the cleanest town was Komsomolsk: 94.9% of local residents think their town is clean. By contrast, 63.9% of Makiyivka respondents said their city was dirty. According to respondents, the main reasons for dirtiness are, as a rule, the low level of awareness among municipal residents, who leave garbage after themselves, and the lack of penalties for such behavior.

The problem of garbage removal raises concerns the most among residents of Lutsk and Makiyivka. However, in each place, garbage removal was the biggest problem in private neighborhoods. Experts link this to difficulties with collecting payments for this service from residents of private houses, as the cost is included in the residential fee for those who live in apartment buildings.

Satisfaction with the quality of street cleaning matches marks given to the overall appearance of the give location. Municipal street cleaning is the best in Komsomolsk and the worst in Makiyivka.

Over the last three years, the biggest number of positive changes in overall appearance took place in Kolomyia. Also, the situation more-or-less improved in Alchevsk, Komsomolsk and Chernihiv. However, residents of Lutsk and Makiyivka were pessimistic about changes in their local situation: about 20% said that the overall appearance of their city had deteriorated.

Respondents gave good marks to the quality of education

Overall, respondents gave positive marks to the quality of educational services in schools of all types. The highest positive marks were registered among respondents in Komsomolsk, Chernihiv and Lutsk. In particular, the overall evaluation of the quality of education in municipal schools grew the most in Lutsk compared to 2004.

The overwhelming majority of respondents rated education of all types not only as good, but also as quite accessible and affordable. Education turned out to be the most accessible and affordable for residents of Komsomolsk and Alchevsk and the least so for residents of Makiyivka and Kolomyia.

As to how well the knowledge of municipal high-school graduates matched modern requirements, in terms of continuing education, the highest marks were given by parents of schoolchildren in Komsomolsk,

Alchevsk and Chernihiv, and the lowest by parents in Kolomyia and Makiyivka.

Kolomyia residents use social assistance and services the most

The highest share of individuals who are eligible for social assistance or social services at least of one type was registered in Kolomyia (64.9%) and the lowest was in Lutsk (41.9%). Residents of Kolomyia take advantage of their eligibility the most actively: over the last 12 months, 50% of Kolomyia residents received some kind of social assistance or services. In this aspect, the least active were residents of Komsomolsk: only one-fourth (26.5%) took advantage of their eligibility to get social assistance or social services.

In most cities and towns, the largest group of individuals eligible for social assistance or social services was benefit recipients—from 17.3% to 44.7% of those polled. The second place went to those eligible to receive social assistance: from 17.5% to 29.1%. The share of those who are eligible for job assistance ranged from 7.1% to 23.1%. Recipients of social services constituted the smallest group in all cities and towns, without exception: from 1.8% to 5.7%. Most frequently, residents applied for benefits and social assistance. Respondents reported that they needed employment assistance services the least.

According to respondents, the main problems with the way social assistance and social services were provided in their town or city were excessive queues and lack of information about these services.

Local government efforts: Komsomolsk is trusted the most

From 24.7% to 49.7% of respondents reported that, over the last 12 months, they had turned to representatives of their local governments, mostly to residential service providers and social security services, for assistance in resolving specific problems. The lowest share of such individuals was registered in Chernihiv. In this city, the poll also registered the lowest share of those who had something to complain about, but did not do so. In Makiyivka, the share of those who did not turn to their local government with an appeal or complaint was equal to the share of those who did turn to their local government—about 50%.

Residents of Komsomolsk trust their mayor the most, 79%. Kolomyia residents demonstrated a high level of confidence

in their mayor as well. Voters of Makiyivka showed the least trust in their mayor: only 7.7%.

Over the last three years, the level of corruption in the project's partner cities and towns has remained practically unchanged. Among respondents who admitted that, in addition to official payment for a particular service from municipal bodies, they also made additional settlements in cash or in kind, the greatest number was registered in Makiyivka—17.2%. The lowest share of such individuals was in Komsomolsk, about 3.5%. Only in Lutsk, had the share of respondents who admitted to giving bribes shrunk nearly 50%—from 15.6% in 2004 to 8.8% in 2007.

According to respondents, the services that needed improvement the most were residential services and roads.

City dwellers know about PV's community initiatives

A relatively small share of residents in each place, ranging from 4.8% to 26.6%, responded to the name "People's Voice," saying that they knew about the work of this project in their town. Residents of Komsomolsk were the most informed about the project.

Overall, between 29.5% and 61.2% of adult residents had heard about at least one community initiative implemented under the "People's Voice" project in their location—regardless of their evaluation of the actual results. This is evidence that, in most instances, respondents do not link project activities to the name of the project. PV initiatives were given the most publicity in Kolomyia and Komsomolsk and the least in Chernihiv. ■

The "People's Voice" project supports the development and facilitation of various citizen engagement activities throughout Ukraine, as a means of improving the quality of municipal services. The project is financed by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and implemented by the World Bank in association with a number of key local partners—PADCO, a consultancy, and the International Centre for Policy Studies (ICPS). The project began in February 2004 in six Ukrainian urban centers: Alchevsk, Chernihiv, Kolomyia, Komsomolsk, Lutsk, and Makiyivka. The project ends in November 2007.

For additional information, contact Project Research Coordinator Maryna Ogay by telephone at (380-44) 484-4408 or via e-mail at: mogay@icps.kiev.ua.

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icps newsletter editor: Olha Lvova (olvova@icps.kiev.ua)
Phone: (380-44) 484-4400. Fax: (380-44) 484-4402
English text editor: L.A. Wolanskyj
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Address: vul. Pymonenka 13A, Kyiv, Ukraine 04050
Web-site: <http://www.icps.com.ua/eng/>