



CENTER FOR NEW IDEAS

**WHAT DO BELARUSIANS
WORRY ABOUT?**
*PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES
IN THE REGIONS TODAY*

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The plight of the Belarusian regions is increasingly overshadowed by other issues. Russia’s war against Ukraine, continued domestic repressions, and an overall lack of stability have crowded out any attention to the lives of Belarusians in the regions from the information space. In this research note, we pick up on our [research into regional problems in September 2021](#). The plan is to conduct such monitoring on a regular basis, comparing everyday life in the regions with life in the capital. We aim to capture the experiences and emotions of ordinary Belarusians.

HOW THE RESEARCH WAS CONDUCTED

First of all, we conducted a series of interviews with regional development experts and identified the problems faced by residents of the Belarusian regions. The topics raised, as well as our hypotheses, were developed during a focus group session with activists from different regions of the country.

As a result of this work, a final list of questions was compiled for a large-scale survey, which was conducted in partnership with the [People’s Poll](#) initiative in December 2022. The survey was carried out among the protest-supporting audience via a Viber bot. We received 1,775 responses which we processed for our analysis.

The audience of the People’s Poll is politicized and represents the active part of the protest-supporting population. This certainly limits the possibility of generalizing the findings of the research to Belarusian society as a whole. The sample is also biased toward respondents with higher education: they make up 74% of the sample (see Annex 1 “*Poll sample by education*”).

Although the audience of the study is more politicized than the general population, this research nevertheless provides important material for understanding the differences between the various regions and the main problems that Belarusians living in them face.

WHAT ARE THE “BELARUSIAN REGIONS”?

In Belarus, reference to “the regions” usually means either: (i) everything outside of Minsk; or (ii) administrative regions. In this study, we distinguish regional cities from district centers, villages,

and other settlements. The perception of problems in the regional centers differs significantly from perceptions in Minsk, district centers, and smaller settlements.

For this reason, the comparative tables comprise three columns: “capital”, “regional center”, and “region”. The category “region” refers to the following kinds of settlement: agro-towns or villages, city or urban settlements, and district centers. Where applicable, the specific type of locality will be indicated.

GENERAL SITUATION IN THE REGIONS: THE FAILURE OF STATE POLICY AND DEMOGRAPHIC CRISIS

For several decades the state has been unable to solve a range of problems. These include the lack of genuine local self-government, low competitiveness, the insignificant investment attractiveness of districts, a lack of mobility, and outdated administrative-territorial divisions.

The crisis since August 2020 has reduced the already limited ability of the authorities to influence the situation. It is unlikely that any restarting of regional development policy would succeed without comprehensive and broad reforms. The main directions of transformation are described in the Center for New Ideas’ study “[How to Stop Degradation and Restart the Development of Belarusian Regions](#)”,¹ but no one should expect their implementation before democratic transformations have begun.

Against the background of decades of regional policy failure, there have been noticeable demographic changes. The population has increased in all regional centers except Mahiliou, despite a decrease in the total number of inhabitants of Belarus by almost 650,000 people. Belarusians tend to live in cities where the quality of life is higher and it is easier to find a job.

At the same time, there have been no positive demographic trends in any of the regions. Even the number of residents in the Minsk region has decreased, and this despite the urbanization of the Minsk region and its population doubling this century: from 145,702 inhabitants in 2002 to 265,137 in 2020.

¹ А. Родненков, И. Щедренок А. Radniankou, I. Shchadranok. Как остановить деградацию и перезапустить развитие белорусских регионов: шесть первоочередных направлений для действий (From protracted decline toward a roadmap for reforms: how to rebuild Belarus’s regional development policy) <https://newbelarus.vision/perezapustit-razvitie-belarusskix-regionov/>

	2002	2022		2002	2022
Brest	290 673	340 723	Brest region	1 469 800	1 324 027
Viciebsk	348 031	360 419	Viciebsk region	1 340 059	1 103 833
Homiel	488 139	503 984	Homiel region	1 523 145	1 357 897
Hrodna	305 262	357 493	Hrodna region	1 160 218	1 006 614
Mahiliou	357 191	355 436	Mahiliou region	1 186 253	1 000 845
Minsk	1 699 347	1 996 553	Minsk region	1 521 592	1 465 755

*Data from the Belarusian Statistical Committee.

If we consider district centers, cities, and villages or agricultural towns — which we refer to as “regions” in this study – then the situation looks heterogeneous and there may be local features. Nevertheless, we can say with confidence that the growth of regional cities in the last twenty years has occurred primarily due to internal migration of the population from the regions.

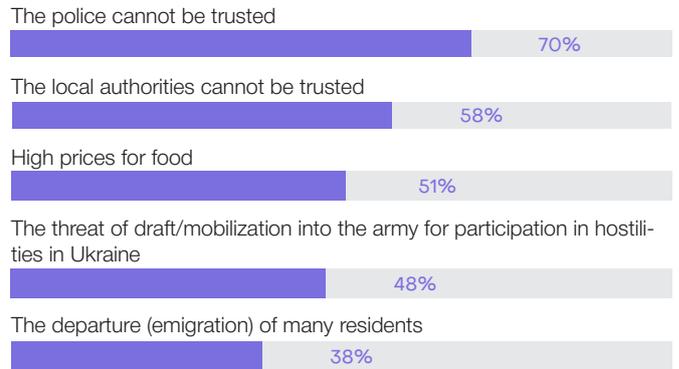
This was accompanied by a broader process of centralization: 75% of the urban population (59% of the total population) lives in 20 out of 115 towns, and 75% of the rural population lives in 5% of rural settlements.

FIVE BASIC PROBLEMS VOICED BY BELARUSIAN MEN AND WOMEN

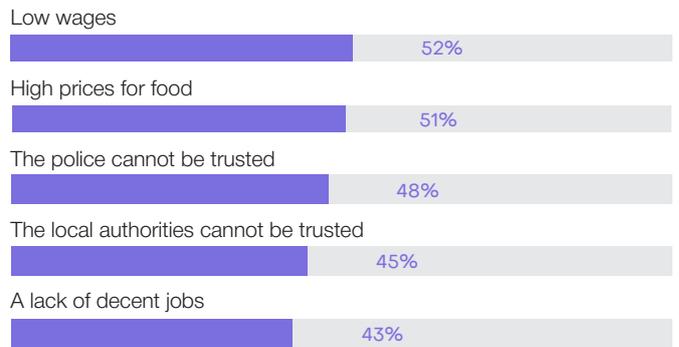
The differences between the problems facing the regions and the capital were quickly apparent from the Surveys. The main regional difficulty, a lack of decent jobs, was not among the top ten problems identified by residents in the capital. Among the problems identified by Minsk residents, low wages ranked in eighth place. By contrast, whereas Minsk residents worried a lot about emigration and the threat of mobilization, these responses were selected by far fewer residents in the regions.

The severity of economic difficulties in the regions was also noticeable in the 2021 survey, but the three main problems identified then remained the same for the regions and for the capital. Now this division is clearly expressed: political challenges, such as a lack of trust in the police and authorities, are most salient for residents of Minsk; while socio-economic problems prevail as the most pressing concerns in the regions.

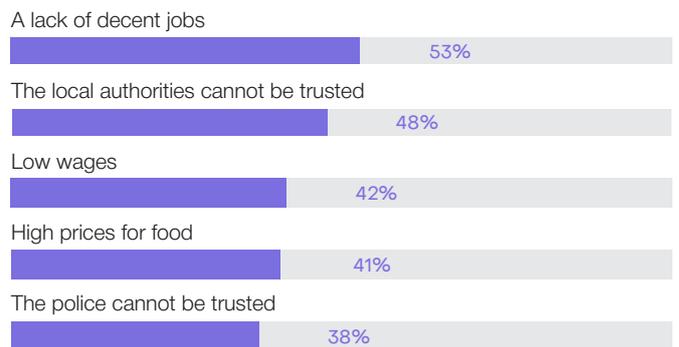
The five main problems identified by protest-supporting respondents in Minsk



The five main problems identified by protest-supporting respondents in regional centers



The five main problems identified by protest-supporting respondents in the regions



*Research conducted with the People’s Poll initiative. December 2022.

POLITICAL DIMENSION: DISTRUST OF THE STATE AND FEARS OF MOBILIZATION

TRUST IN THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES HAS NOT BEEN RESTORED

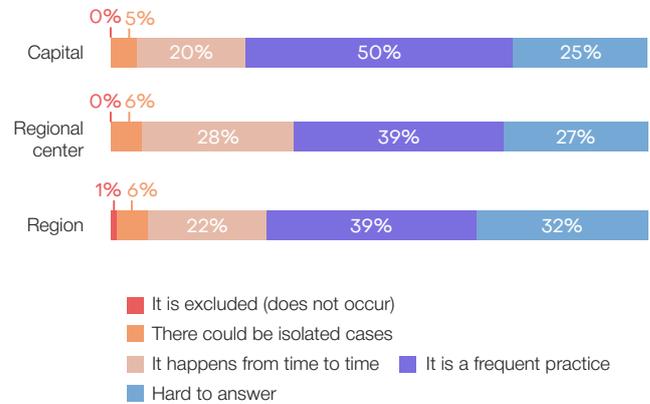
The political situation has not become more peaceful, compared to 2021: repressions continue, and the war has perturbed the lives of Belarusian men and women. At the local level, the survey results reveal that trust in the local authorities remains at a low level.

The difference between the capital and the regions is insignificant here. Earlier research, before the events of 2020, found similar attitudes among citizens. For example, research carried out by SYMPA in 2018 showed that it was precisely the local authorities that made it to the first place in the rating of popular distrust² - ahead of government departments and ministries, parliament, the church, the president, the army, and public organizations.

A more noticeable difference is found in trust in the police: 71% of Minsk residents noted this as a worry, compared to 31% of residents in villages and agro-towns, as well as 45% in district cities and 48% in regional centers. We assume that the reason for such different assessments is that repressions were felt primarily in the capital, and to a lesser extent in small towns and rural areas.

Respondents were also heterogeneous in their perception of the level of corruption. Half of the residents of the capital (50%) were convinced that government representatives' corrupt activities occur as "isolated cases", but already at the level of agro-towns/villages this figure was only 28%. At the same time, business owners and respondents employed in the public sector assessed the prevalence of corruption equally: about a third of each segment said that it is "a frequent practice".

In your opinion, how common is the use of an official position for the purpose of personal enrichment (corruption) among representatives of the authorities in your locality?



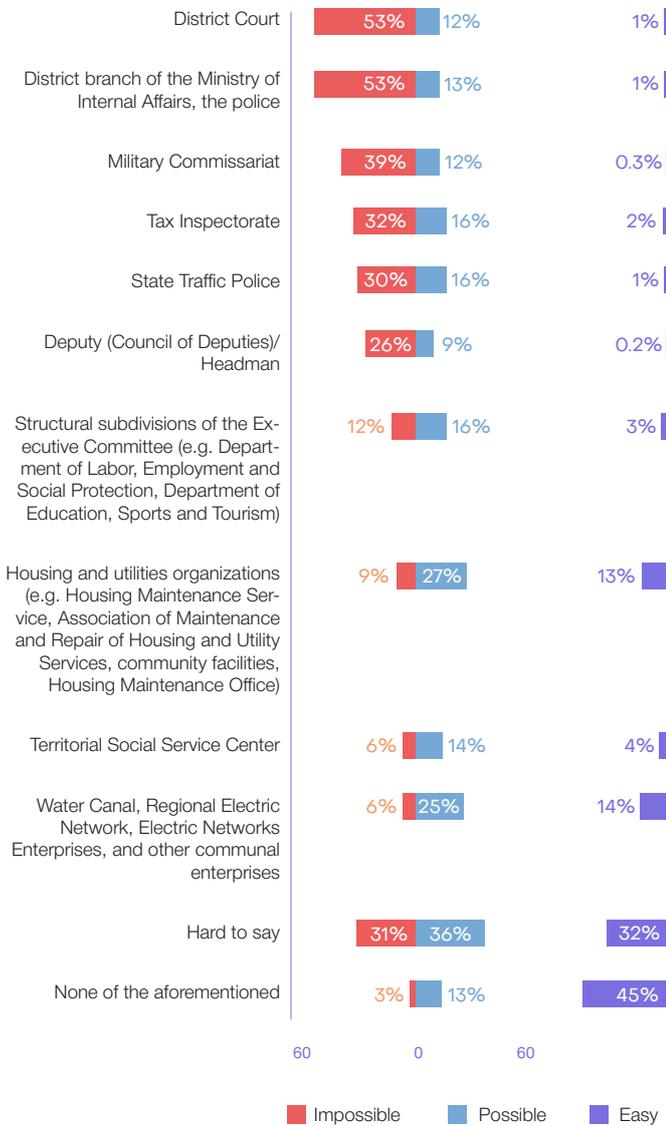
*Research of the People's Poll audience. December 2022.

The sample we interviewed distrusted the authorities as such. At the same time, it can be assumed that experience and knowledge of the mechanisms of corruption is insufficient (slightly less than a third found it difficult to assess the level of corruption). Moreover, in smaller settlements, the authorities seem to be "closer to the people" and there were fewer suspicions or accusations of corruption.

PROTEST-SUPPORTING BELARUSIANS SEE DIFFICULTIES WITH THE DEFENSE OF THEIR INTERESTS IN THE STATE BODIES

In addition to a general lack of trust in local authorities and the police, respondents noted low opportunities to defend their interests in specified state bodies. The police, the courts, and the military commissariat were perceived by the respondents as bodies where it is practically impossible to protect their rights.

² Сympa. Гражданское общество в Беларуси: доверие и участие населения, особенности взаимодействия с государством (Civil society in Belarus: trust, popular participation, and the nature of interactions with the state). Электронный источник: https://sympa-by.eu/sites/default/files/library/brief_final_0.pdf



*Research of the People's Poll audience. December 2022.

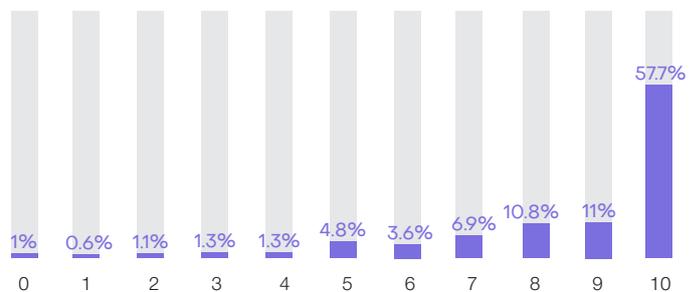
The respondents assessed the housing and utilities organizations, as well as enterprises that serve residential matters, more favorably in terms of defending their interests. The Territorial Social Service Center was similarly assessed, but there were far fewer responses to this item on the list. This most likely reflects the fact that not many people encounter this organization due to their living circumstances. We found no significant difference between the assessments of residents of the regions, regional centers, and the capital.

Most respondents were “rather dissatisfied” or “definitely dissatisfied” with the general state of affairs in their populated areas — more than 65% of the survey participants stated this. At the same time, extremely negative assessments prevailed among the respondents from Minsk where more than 40% of respondents expressed “extreme” dissatisfaction with the general state of affairs in their city. Interestingly, study participants from agrotowns and villages (about 13% of the entire sample) gave the most positive answers to this question.

THE THREAT OF MOBILIZATION PRIMARILY CONCERNS RESIDENTS OF MINSK AND REGIONAL CENTERS, BUT THE MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS FOLLOW THE TOPIC

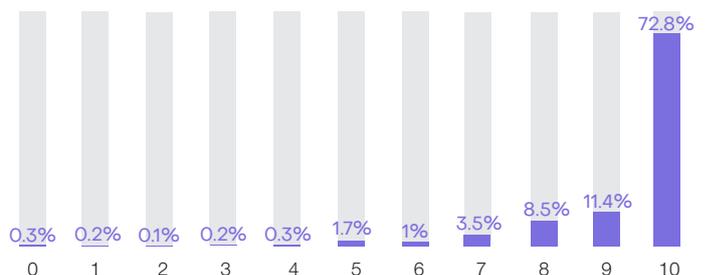
The news about Russia’s aggression in Ukraine, as well as media reports about the possible entry of Belarus into the war, above all attracted the attention of protest-supporting Belarusians. At the same time, it was only the residents of Minsk who included the threat of mobilization among their five most important problems. In the regional centers the issue ranked in sixth place. For the regions, the issue was far less salient. In any case, news about the war in Ukraine was more concerning to respondents.

Discussion of the possible entry of Belarus into the war



Although this is less compared to the attention to the news about the war in Ukraine.

News about the war in Ukraine



On the one hand, the theme of the war and Belarus’s possible participation in it has attracted the attention of protest-supporting Belarusians, but, on the other hand, it is not identified as a priority problem. There could be various reasons for this perception: from the small opportunity of influencing the situation to hopes that Belarusian troops will not join the war.

ECONOMIC DIMENSION: THE LACK OF DECENT JOBS, HIGH PRICES, AND AN INCREASINGLY SCARCE RANGE OF GOODS AND SERVICES

THE LACK OF GOOD JOBS IS THE MAIN PROBLEM OF SMALL TOWNS

A lack of good jobs worried a small proportion of the capital’s residents (13%), but remained very relevant for the rest of Belarus — in the regions the figure goes up to 53%, and in regional centers it is 43%.

At the same time, answers to questions about the labor market revealed a crisis of vacancies, as perceived by respondents. More than 90% believed that it was “rather difficult” or “definitely difficult” to find a good job at the time of the survey. Even in Minsk, about 50% of respondents believed that it is “rather difficult” to find a decent job. More negative assessments prevailed in the regions, especially in district centers where about 80% of respondents believed that there are definitely no good vacancies in their populated areas.

Meanwhile, low wages, another manifestation of the labor market crisis, was the most worrying for respondents from regional centers, but was also one of the top three problems in the regions. These related issues are in fact symptoms of a single problem, since for many it is the level of pay that is associated with the concept of a “decent job”.

OUTSIDE OF MINSK, EVERY FOURTH RESPONDENT GOES TO WORK IN ANOTHER CITY

Labor migration is expectedly higher in the regions, especially in agro-towns and villages. Of those living outside Minsk, 23% indicated that they go to work in another locality.

Working in another city is becoming the norm for the regions: 17% of those living outside the capital said that most residents of their locality go to work in another city; 7% were sure that almost everyone does this; and a further 46% answered that many people do this, but not the majority.

Do you work and live in the same locality?

	Yes, I work in my locality	Yes, because I work remotely	HN0, I go to work in another locality by transportation/ on foot
Brest region	81%	5%	14%
Viciebsk region	75%	6%	19%
Homiel region	74%	11%	15%
Hrodna region	80%	7%	12%
Minsk region	51%	7%	42%
Mahiliou region	75%	9%	16%
Minsk	84%	11%	5%

**Research of the People’s Poll audience. December 2022.*

The fact that, in this regard, the Minsk region is significantly different is curious but easy to explain: 42% noted that they go to work to another locality. Minsk and nearby cities are increasingly attracting the labor masses, thus strengthening centralization.

THE VAST MAJORITY OF RESIDENTS CONSIDER PRICES FOR FOOD, GOODS, AND SERVICES TO BE HIGH

High food prices worry residents of the capital and the regions equally. The overwhelming majority of respondents, more than 80%, believed that the current prices for food products are at “rather high” or “definitely high” levels. In Minsk, 88% of respondents agreed with these positions, compared with 83% outside the capital.

At the same time, about a quarter of study participants from agro-towns and villages called food prices “acceptable (average)”. About 16% of respondents from regional centers and other Belarusian towns (without the status of a district or regional center) agreed with this evaluation.

Speaking about the prices for food in general in your populated area, do you consider them high or low?

	Definitely high	Rather high	Average
Capital	57%	31%	10%
Regional center	53%	37%	9%
Regions	38%	41%	18%

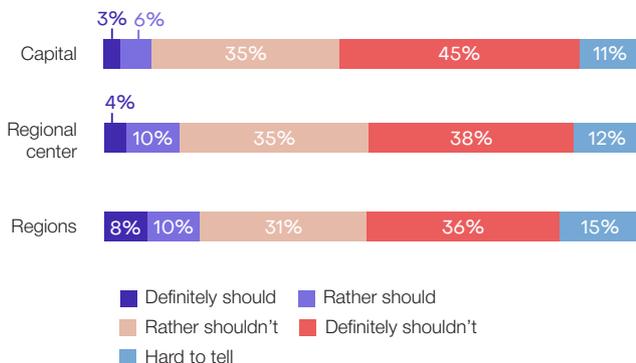
**Research of the People's Poll audience. The totals do not equate to 100 since there were other response options. December 2022.*

No noticeable difference was found in the perception of prices for food and non-food goods and services.

PROTEST-SUPPORTING BELARUSIANS DISAPPROVE OF PRICE REGULATION

Уголовные дела и последующие приговоры в отношении руководителей различных организаций за повышение цен на продукты питания, товары и услуги вызвали резонанс в обществе. В новостной повестке эта тема держалась на протяжении осени 2022 года. Учитывая это, мы решили задать вопрос респондентам по поводу их отношения к практике регулирования цен.

In some countries, the state is more involved in economic processes, and in some — less. Do you think the state of Belarus should or shouldn't limit the rise in prices for goods and services?



**Research of the People's Poll audience. December 2022.*

Despite overwhelming concerns about high prices for goods and services, protesting Belarusians believe that the state should not limit the rise in prices for goods and services.

THE RANGE OF GOODS AND SERVICES IS INSUFFICIENT AND BECOMING SCARCER

Belarusians feel the effects of sanctions, at least in so far as there has been a reduction in the assortment of products available to buy. The majority of respondents (about 65%) believed that the choice of goods and services that could be purchased in their locality is insufficient.

At the same time, moderately negative assessments prevail. Only respondents from agro-towns and villages were more inclined to evaluate the choice not as “rather insufficient”, but as “definitely insufficient”. The distribution of answers is approximately the same among Minsk residents and respondents from regional centers and regions.

Also, about 85% believe that the range of available goods and services has deteriorated. First of all, almost 95% of respondents from Minsk thought so, while in the regions 84% of respondents did.

The problem with the range of goods available was not recorded in our survey at the end of 2021. By the time of the current survey, the effect of sanctions had become obvious, including those that were introduced after the start of the war in Ukraine. At the same time, although respondents noted problems with the choice of goods, this situation was not critical for them and not a cause of great anguish.

SOCIAL DIMENSION: DETERIORATING HEALTH CARE, BUT A SATISFACTORY QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND TRANSPORTATION

The economic decline of the regions is also leading to a decrease in social standards: the quality of medical services, public transportation, and road infrastructure are all deteriorating. Furthermore, although in the future these problems will accumulate and increase the gap between quality of life in the capital and the regions, at the moment many social services remain at an acceptable level (in comparison with other areas).

Which problems of your populated area have worried you the most lately?

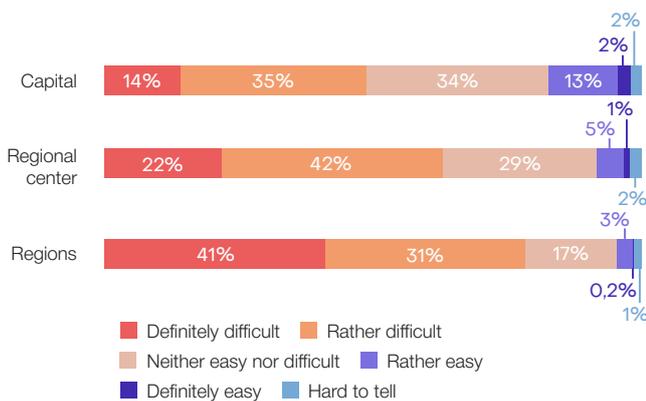
	Minsk	Regional center	Regions
Low quality of medical services	20%	22%	41%
Low quality of education	22%	11%	10%
Bad state / absence of roads	4%	13%	31%
Poor public transportation services	2%	8%	11%

*Research of the People's Poll audience. December 2022.

IT IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO GET HIGH-QUALITY MEDICAL CARE IN THE REGIONS

Residents in the regions were the most concerned about the poor quality of medical services. In regional centers, the number of respondents concerned about this problem was roughly half as many.

In your opinion, is it difficult or easy to obtain high-quality medical care in your locality?



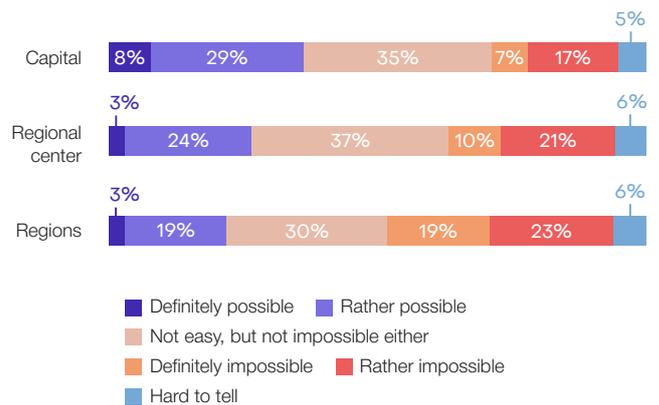
*Research of the People's Poll audience. December 2022.

BELARUSIANS ARE SATISFIED WITH THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The situation in education was perceived more optimistically than other issues. More than a quarter of all respondents believed that it is possible to get a good education in their locality, and in Minsk more than a third of respondents thought so.

At the same time, about a third of respondents reported that getting a high-quality education where they live is difficult, but not impossible. In general, more than 50% of respondents — both in the regions and in Minsk — thought that their locality has access to high-quality educational services, although obtaining this access is not always easy.

In your opinion, is it possible or impossible to obtain a good education in your locality?



*Research of the People's Poll audience. December 2022.

ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE SUFFERS IN SMALL TOWNS BUT IS WELL MAINTAINED IN LARGER CITIES

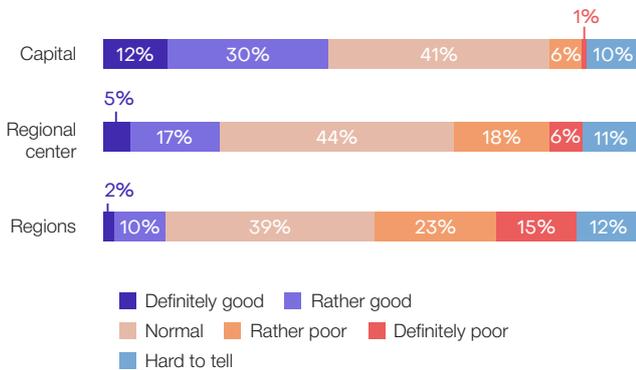
Respondents gave a similar assessment in relation to the quality of roads. It is understandable that residents of the regions evaluated road quality less positively than residents of Minsk or regional centers. About a third of the residents of the regions (29%) called the roads “definitely poor” in their own locality, but at the same time, about a third (26%) also chose the answer “normal”.

PROTEST-SUPPORTING BELARUSIANS ARE GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Public transportation emerged from the survey data as an issue about which respondents were rather “optimistic”. The majority believed that public transportation in their locality works either “normally” (41%) or well (22% chose the options “rather good” and “definitely good”).

Interestingly enough, more than 40% of Minsk residents rated the work of public transportation services in the capital as good. The general tendency was that the larger the city or settlement, the better residents deemed the public transportation services.

How do you assess the work of public transport in general in your locality?



*Research of the People’s Poll audience. December 2022.

ENTERTAINMENT ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE HOME LACKING IN THE REGIONS

Respondents were asked: “How do you assess the opportunities for spending leisure time outside home in your locality?” Responses revealed that the situation with entertainment provision in Minsk is perceived favorably. In the regions, people considered that they did not have enough options. At the same time, how respondents assess leisure opportunities is related to the size of the settlement: the larger is the location, the better the situation was perceived.

The survey included an open-ended question about forms of entertainment in the local area. Respondents pointed to a lack of sports facilities and playgrounds, city activities, cafes and restaurants, and cultural events.

ONLY ONE IN TEN RESPONDENTS HAS A FOREIGN VISA, WHILE SEVEN OUT OF TEN DID NOT TRAVEL ANYWHERE LAST YEAR

In 2022, 72% of survey respondents did not leave Belarus. At the same time, 88% of the respondents did not have a valid visa to any country at the time of the survey, although the vast majority (82%) would like to travel to other countries more often.

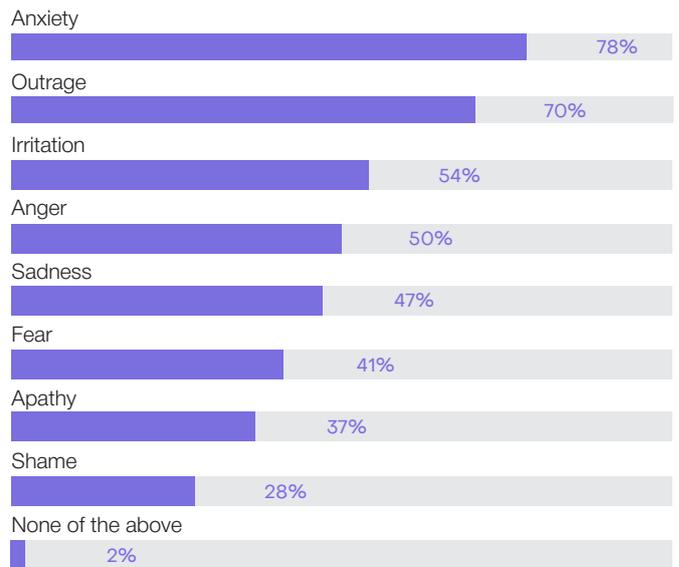
Belarusians would like to retain the possibility of foreign travel, despite the increasing isolation of the country. Accordingly, in reply to the question “How much do you need a visa, based on your lifestyle and plans?”, 35% of respondents chose the option “a visa is necessary”, and 54% noted that “it would be nice to

have a visa, but it is not necessary.” But the vast majority of respondents believed that obtaining a visa is either “definitely difficult” (53%) or “rather difficult” (31%).

EMOTIONAL DIMENSION: ANXIETY, LACK OF PLANNING, HARD NEWS AGENDA

Last year turned out to be difficult for the Belarusian society. Feelings of anxiety, outrage, often irritation, and anger prevailed among the protest audience.

Have you experienced any of these emotions and feelings in the last month? Check only those which you have experienced (Percentage who had experienced the emotion - whole country):

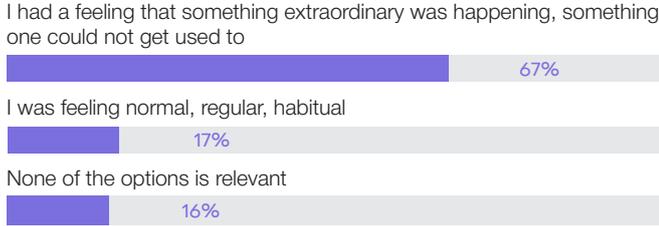


To a certain extent this confirms the conclusions of earlier research by the Center for New Ideas³ that “the feeling of anxiety and a sense of personal danger are relevant today for 79% of respondents.”

There are no significant regional differences in the entire block of answers to questions about emotions, hence we are presenting the data for the country as a whole in the tables. The majority of the respondents noted that they felt that something extraordinary was happening, something one could not get used to (67%).

3 Г. Коршунов, М. Кудревич. (G. Korshunov, M. Kudrevich) Коллективная травма белорусского общества: масштабы и варианты проработки. (The collective trauma of Belarusian society: scale and options for resolution), Стр.16. Электронный источник: https://newbelarus.vision/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Collective-Trauma_CNI_Research.pdf

Our emotions often change depending on the current events. Regardless of that, looking at the past month, how were you feeling most of the time (whole country)?



LACK OF PLANNING AND SENSE OF DEPRESSION

Most of the respondents were not planning their lives, even for the ensuing several months, and certainly not for a year ahead. Those options only applied to 21% and 9%, respectively. In addition, about a quarter of all respondents said that they do not make plans at all.

How far ahead do you plan your life now (whole country)?



Answering the question “How much do you agree or disagree that the entire Belarusian society is now in a state of depression, dejection?” 39% and 48%, respectively, chose the option “Totally agree” and “Rather agree”.

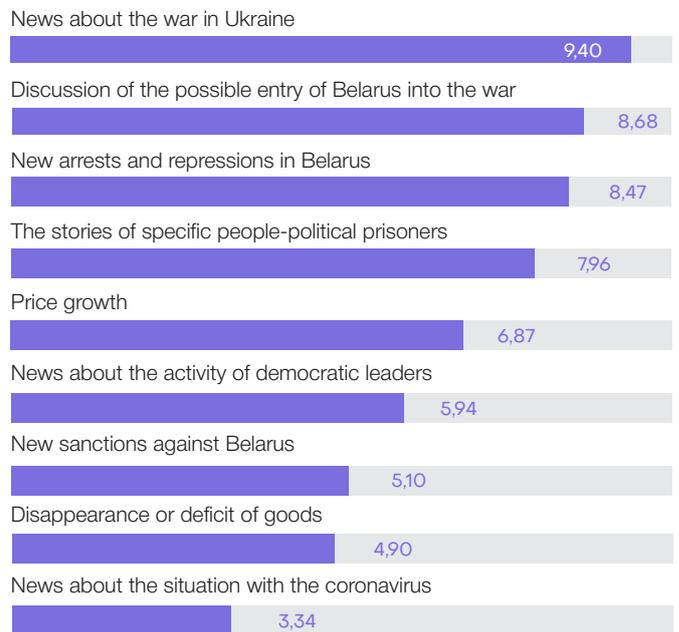
NEWS ABOUT WAR AND REPRESSIONS ATTRACTS THE ATTENTION OF PROTEST BELARUSIANS MORE THAN MOST

The emotional state of Belarusians could be explained by the topics that attract the most attention of protest-supporting Belarusians. News about Russia’s war in Ukraine came out as the biggest current events issue for these respondents. Media coverage of new arrests and repressions, as well as a discussion of the possible entry of Belarus into the war, were the next most noted events.

Stories about specific people or political prisoners still attracted the attention of the audience we interviewed.

Below is a list of socio-political events in Belarus and neighboring countries that have been covered by the media recently. Which of them attracted your attention and evoked strong emotions, and which ones had less attention and emotions?

Rate each event on a scale from 0 (no emotions or you missed this news) to 10 (a lot of emotions) - Average estimate



News about the situation with the coronavirus did not attract much attention and caused few emotional reactions in 2022. Indeed, Belarusians appear to have lost interest in the pandemic, which is logical given a decrease in the number of people falling ill and the global trend toward a decrease in its threat.

The news about new sanctions against Belarus is of little more interest to respondents than the lack of food products. The news about the activities of democratic leaders continued to attract attention and evoke feelings, the intensity of which was estimated as comparable to the intensity of emotions about rising prices.

CONCLUSION: *BELARUSIANS ARE SURVIVING BETWEEN THE WAR, THE STATE, AND A CHALLENGING ECONOMIC SITUATION*

In the year and a half since our last research, the situation with regional development has worsened, and many of our pessimistic forecasts are becoming reality.

The political situation has not become more peaceful, repressions often extend to the regions, and the outbreak of war in Ukraine has brought fears of mobilization. The main result of this is that trust in the state is not returning, people only expect the state to cause them problems. Citizens do not believe that they can defend their interests through state bodies and it is extremely difficult to predict how long it will take to restore their trust, or when this process might begin.

The economic situation has significantly deteriorated as well. The regions are suffering from a lack of decent jobs: eight out of ten respondents from regional centers are sure that there are no good vacancies in their city. In Minsk, half as many respondents shared this opinion. As a result, outside the capital, every fourth respondent goes to work in another city. It is difficult to imagine that in the coming years the state will be able to correct this situation.

The crisis in the labor market further manifests itself in the low salaries for the vacancies that exist. In such a situation, the rising prices of goods and services are felt acutely. Western sanctions have significantly reduced the range of goods on the shelves; not only have goods grown more expensive, but choice has become slimmer.

Against this background, social standards seem to be stable. The most acute social problem for the regions remains the decline in the quality of medical services. The smaller the settlement, the harder to access reliable healthcare. This is most likely influenced by both the departure of skilled workers to the urban centers and the consequences of the coronavirus.

The quality of education and public transportation are satisfactory in the eyes of Belarusians. There is dissatisfaction with the road infrastructure in small towns.

There is also a specific problem with entertainment provision: in the regions, according to survey respondents, there is nowhere to spend one's free time. Every fourth respondent pointed to the lack of leisure venues. Everything is missing: entertainment events, affordable cafes or restaurants, sports facilities, concerts of foreign performers, and theatres. Many pointed out that some venues were closed after 2020.

It is even more difficult for Belarusians to leave the country. Only every tenth person has a visa, and obtaining one is perceived to be a difficult task. Last year, only 17% of Minsk residents and 11% of residents of the regions were able to travel abroad as tourists.

Such a context engenders a range of difficult emotions in society. Protest-supporting Belarusians remain riveted to news about the war and possible mobilization, as well as news about arrests and reports on the lives of political prisoners. News about sanctions or the democratic movement is of less and less interest.

The respondents themselves admit that what is happening is extraordinary and difficult to adjust to. For many, the feeling of anxiety gnaws at them and affects their planning for the future: most people today only make plans for a few weeks ahead. More than 85% are sure that society is in a state of depression and dejection.

That is the state of life in the Belarusian regions at the end of 2022. The amount of stress in society is not decreasing, and there is less and less hope that the situation will change for the better.

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The Center for New Ideas is a think tank dedicated to developing ideas on how to take advantage of the opportunities and respond to the challenges that Belarus faces in the 21st century. Our mission is to help political and social organisations build a more open, prosperous, and resilient Belarus.

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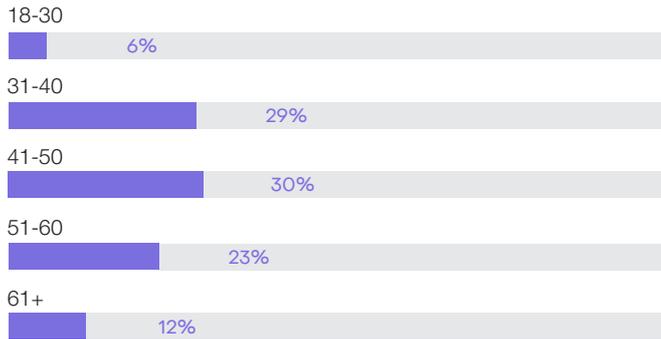
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Cover photo by Aliaksandra Murashka

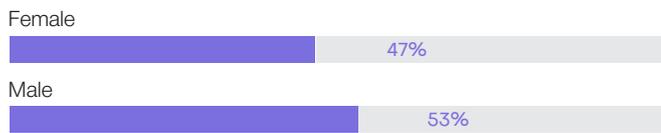
APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. WHO HAS BEEN POLLED?

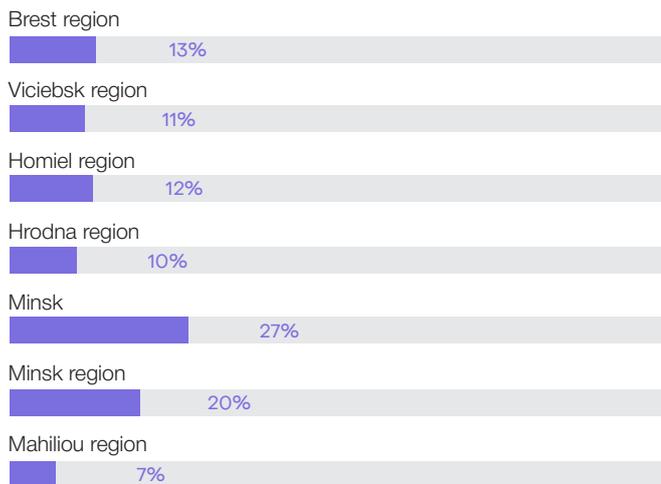
Poll sample by age, People's Poll, December 2022



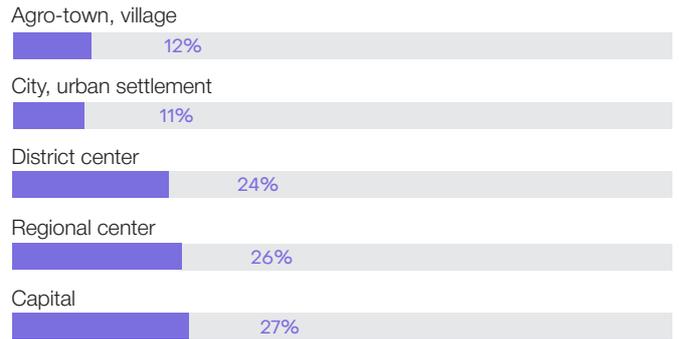
Poll sample by sex, People's Poll, December 2022



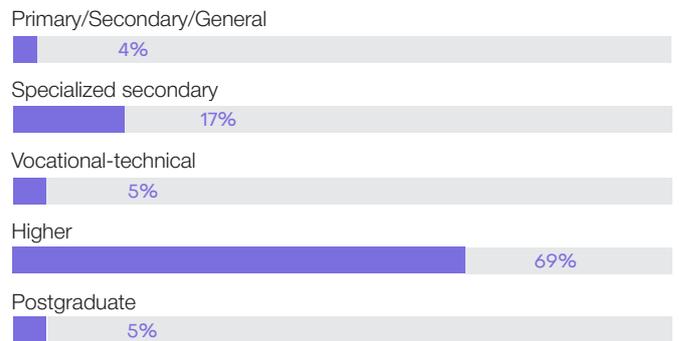
Poll sample by region, People's Poll, December 2022



Poll sample by the size of a locality, People's Poll, December 2022



Poll sample by education, People's Poll, December 2022



APPENDIX 2. QUESTIONNAIRE OF THE PEOPLE'S POLL AUDIENCE RESEARCH

Overall assessment of the situation

1. Generally speaking, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the state of affairs in your locality?

- Definitely satisfied
- Rather satisfied
- Partly satisfied, partly not
- Rather dissatisfied
- Definitely dissatisfied
- Hard to tell

2. In your opinion, how does the state of affairs in your locality look against the background of the state of affairs on average throughout the country?

- Definitely better
- Rather better
- Same (no better, no worse)
- Rather worse
- Definitely worse
- Hard to tell

3. What problems in your locality have been of most concern to you lately? (Please select a maximum of five answers)

- High prices for non-food goods and services
- High prices for food
- High prices for housing and communal services
- High level of corruption
- High crime rate
- Few good jobs
- The local authorities cannot be trusted
- The police cannot be trusted
- Low salaries
- Poor quality of medical services
- Low quality of education
- Lack of certain products, goods and services

- The departure (emigration) of many residents
- Poor public transport
- Bad environmental situation
- Poor condition / lack of roads
- Poor condition / lack of cultural facilities
- Poor condition / lack of parks and squares
- Poor condition / lack of sports facilities
- Poor choice / lack of goods and services
- Poor choice of leisure activities outside home
- Ordinary citizens are not allowed to solve local problems
- The threat of drafting / mobilization into the army to participate in hostilities in Ukraine
- None of the above
- Other (you can write your own answer)

Prices for goods, products and services, and their availability

4. Thinking generally about food prices in your locality, do you consider them high or low?

- Definitely low
- Rather low
- Average
- Rather high
- Definitely high
- Hard to tell

5. Thinking generally about prices for non-food products and services in your locality, do you consider them high or low?

- Definitely low
- Rather low
- Average
- Rather high
- Definitely high
- Hard to tell

6. How do you assess the availability and variety of choice (range) of products, goods or services that you can purchase in your locality?

- Definitely sufficient
- Rather sufficient
- Rather insufficient
- Definitely insufficient
- Hard to tell

7. Do you think that over the past six months, the situation with the availability and variety of products, goods and services has become better, worse or has not changed?

- Definitely better (the choice was scarcer earlier)
- Rather better
- Hasn't changed
- Rather worse
- Definitely worse (the choice was better earlier)
- Hard to tell

8. In some countries, the state is more involved in economic processes, and in some — less. Do you think the state of Belarus should or shouldn't limit the rise in prices for goods and services?

- Definitely should
- Rather should
- Rather shouldn't
- Definitely shouldn't
- Hard to tell

Work and trips to other cities and countries

9. Do you think it is easy or difficult to find a good job in your locality?

- Definitely easy
- Rather easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Rather difficult
- Definitely difficult
- Hard to tell

10. In your opinion, compared with the situation in the country as a whole, the level of wages in your region:

- Definitely higher
- Rather higher
- Same (average)
- Rather lower
- Definitely lower
- Difficult to answer

11. Are you currently employed (including regular part-time jobs)?

- Yes, at least 40 hours per week (full-time)
- Yes, fewer than 40 hours per week
- No, I don't work, but I'm looking for a job
- No, I don't work and I'm not looking for a job

If Yes:

Do you work and live in the same locality?

- Yes, because I work remotely
- Yes, I work in my locality
- No, I go to work in another locality by transportation/on foot

12. Thinking about other working residents of your locality, how common do you think it is for residents to travel to another locality to work?

- Rare / infrequent
- Many people do this, but not the majority
- Most residents do this (over 50%)
- Almost all residents do this
- Hard to tell

13. Have you personally traveled outside of Belarus in 2022? Below are the most common purposes of travel, check all that apply to you and/or write your own reason:

- I did not travel outside of Belarus in 2022
- Went on vacation, as a tourist
- Visited relatives, friends
- Went shopping for personal needs
- Traveled on a business trip / to buy goods for sale
- Traveled to study
- Traveled to work
- Other (you can enter your own answer)

14. Would you like to travel to other countries more often than you did in 2022, or not?

- Definitely not
- Rather not
- Rather yes
- Definitely yes
- Hard to tell

15. Do you currently have a valid visa of any country?

- Yes
- No

If No

You replied that you currently do not have any valid visa. But how much do you need a visa, based on your lifestyle and plans?

- A visa is necessary
- It would be nice to have a visa, but there is no necessity
- A visa is rather not needed
- A visa is definitely not needed
- Hard to tell

16. How do you rate how easy or difficult it would be for you to obtain a new visa now?

- Definitely easy
- Rather easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Rather difficult
- Definitely difficult
- Hard to tell

Interaction with the local authorities

17. Which local authorities have you interacted with in 2022 on your own initiative? Select all services or institutions whom you addressed either personally or in writing:

- Water Canal, Regional Electric Network, Electric Networks Enterprises, and other communal enterprises
- Military Commissariat
- State Traffic Police
- Deputy (Council of Deputies)/Headman
- Tax Inspectorate
- Housing and utilities organizations (e.g. Housing Maintenance Service, Association of Maintenance and Repair of Housing and Utility Services, community facilities, Housing Maintenance Office)
- District department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the police
- District Court
- Structural subdivisions of the Executive Committee (e.g. Department of Labor, Employment and Social Protection, Department of Education, Sports and Tourism)
- Territorial Social Service Center
- None of the aforementioned
- Other (you can enter your own variant of an answer)

18. In your assessment, in which of these authorities it is easy or relatively easy to defend your interests at present? Check all such organizations or bodies:

- Water Canal, Regional Electric Network, Electric Networks Enterprises, and other communal enterprises
- Military Commissariat
- State Traffic Police
- Deputy (Council of Deputies)/Headman
- Tax Inspectorate
- Housing and utilities organizations (e.g. Housing Maintenance Service, Association of Maintenance and Repair of Housing and Utility Services, community facilities, Housing Maintenance Office)
- District department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the police
- District Court
- Structural subdivisions of the Executive Committee (e.g. Department of Labor, Employment and Social Protection, Department of Education, Sports and Tourism)
- Territorial Social Service Center
- None of the aforementioned
- Hard to tell

19. In your assessment, in which of these authorities is it difficult or relatively difficult, but still possible, to defend your interests at present? Check all such organizations or bodies:

- Water Canal, Regional Electric Network, Electric Networks Enterprises, and other communal enterprises
- Military Commissariat
- State Traffic Police
- Deputy (Council of Deputies)/Headman
- Tax Inspectorate
- Housing and utilities organizations (e.g. Housing Maintenance Service, Association of Maintenance and Repair of Housing and Utility Services, community facilities, Housing Maintenance Office)
- District department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the police
- District Court
- Structural subdivisions of the Executive Committee (e.g. Department of Labor, Employment and Social Protection, Department of Education, Sports and Tourism)

- Territorial Social Service Center
- None of the aforementioned
- Hard to tell

20. And in which of these authorities it is impossible to defend your interests at present?

- Water Canal, Regional Electric Network, Electric Networks Enterprises, and other communal enterprises
- Military Commissariat
- State Traffic Police
- Deputy (Council of Deputies)/Headman
- Tax Inspectorate
- Housing and utilities organizations (e.g. Housing Maintenance Service, Association of Maintenance and Repair of Housing and Utility Services, community facilities, Housing Maintenance Office)
- District department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the police
- District Court
- Structural subdivisions of the Executive Committee (e.g. Department of Labor, Employment and Social Protection, Department of Education, Sports and Tourism)
- Territorial Social Service Center
- None of the aforementioned
- Hard to tell

21. In your opinion, how common is the use of an official position for the purpose of personal enrichment (corruption) among representatives of the authorities in your locality?

- It is excluded (does not occur)
- There could be isolated cases
- It happens from time to time
- It is a frequent practice
- Hard to answer

Other questions about your locality

22. In your opinion, is it difficult or easy to obtain high-quality medical care in your locality?

- Definitely easy
- Rather easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Rather difficult
- Definitely difficult
- Hard to tell

23. In your opinion, is it possible or impossible to obtain a good education in your locality?

- Definitely possible
- Rather possible
- Not easy, but not impossible
- Rather impossible
- Definitely impossible
- Hard to tell

24. How do you assess the public transportation services in general in your locality?

- Definitely good
- Rather good
- Normal
- Rather bad
- Definitely bad
- Hard to tell

25. How do you assess the overall condition of roads in your area?

- Definitely good
- Rather good
- Normal
- Rather poor
- Definitely poor
- Hard to tell

26. How do you assess the opportunities for spending leisure time outside home in your locality?

- Definitely good
- Rather good
- Normal
- Rather poor
- Definitely poor
- Hard to tell

For Rather/Definitely bad answers:

If you answered that leisure opportunities are “rather bad” or “definitely bad” in your locality: What exactly is lacking in the first place?

(open question)

Emotional state and planning the future

27. Our emotions often change depending on the current events. Regardless of that, thinking about the past month, how were you feeling most of the time?

- I was feeling normal, regular, habitual
- I had a feeling that something extraordinary was happening, something one could not get used to
- None of the options is relevant

28. Have you experienced any of these emotions and feelings in the last month? Check only those which you have experienced:

- Apathy
- Sadness
- Irritation
- Outrage
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Shame
- None of the above

29. Below is a list of socio-political events in Belarus and neighboring countries that have been covered by the media recently. Which of them attracted your attention and evoked strong emotions, and which ones had less attention and emotions?

Rate each event on a scale from 0 (no emotions or you missed this news) to 10 (a lot of emotions).

- The stories of specific people-political prisoners
- The disappearance or deficit of goods
- News about the war in Ukraine
- News about the activity of democratic leaders
- News about the situation with the coronavirus
- New arrests and repressions in Belarus
- New sanctions against Belarus
- Discussion of the possible entry of Belarus into the war
- Growth in prices

30. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the entire Belarusian society is now in a state of depression and dejection?

- Totally agree
- Rather agree
- Rather disagree
- Totally disagree
- Hard to tell

31. How far ahead do you plan your life now?

- I do not make plans at all
- Several days ahead (but not more than a week)
- Several weeks ahead (but not more than a month)
- Several months ahead (but not more than half a year)
- For the nearest year
- For several years
- Other (you can enter your variant of an answer)