

BRIEF N°1.4: WHAT DO UKRAINIANS THINK ABOUT CURRENT NEGOTIATION APPROACHES?

January–June 2026

Societal buy-in is crucial for any peace process; hence, there is a need to understand how the Ukrainian public views the current and potential future negotiations. To analyse public opinion on specific negotiation issues, this Brief draws on 30 national surveys conducted by 10 leading international and Ukrainian organisations, as well as civil society public statements (see the note on [methodology](#), [war-time surveys](#), and full [Annex](#)).

1. ATTITUDES TOWARDS UKRAINE'S LEADERSHIP AND PARTNERS

1.1. Following a decline in summer 2025, trust in Zelenskyy broadly stabilised, with only modest fluctuations within each polling series ranging between [53–62%](#) (Aug. 2025–May 2026), [43–46%](#) (Dec. 2025–Mar. 2026) and [48–52%](#) (Sep. 2025–Feb. 2026). However, [four surveys](#) noted that trust in Zelenskyy was lower than trust in Zaluzhnyi and Budanov, and at times even than Usyk. [45%](#) of respondents to a February 2026 poll felt that recent personnel changes in the government had failed to restore confidence.

1.2. Concerns about democracy persisted. A sizeable minority held that there was too little democracy (Feb. 2026: [35%](#)) or that it decreased after 2022 (Nov. 2025: [38%](#)). Corruption was seen as a serious problem [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)] with two polls ranking it as more worrying than Russian aggression/shelling [[5](#), [6](#)]. However, [34%](#) of respondents of a January 2026 survey believed that anti-corruption bodies were improving Ukraine's international image ([25%](#) disagreeing, and [33%](#) assessing their impact as neutral).

1.3. Belief in Europe's support remained rather stable from early 2025 through May 2026 ([55–64%](#)); **belief in US support dropped** from [42%](#) last summer and has been stable ([28–31%](#)) between Jan–May 2026.

2. SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE'S NEGOTIATION APPROACH

2.1. Belief in unspecified victory increased by [10%](#) between September 2025 and February 2026, the first such increase since 2023, and remained high in other relevant surveys (Jan. 2026: [65%](#); Feb. 2026: [84%](#); Mar. 2026: [82%](#)).

2.2. War fatigue also increased while resilience remained firm. Although declared readiness to endure the war "as long as necessary" had remained relatively stable through 2025 (ranging from [57–62%](#)), this began to dip starting in February 2026 and reached as low as [48%](#) in April 2026. That said, another February 2026 poll noted that only [less than 5%](#) of respondents reacted to attacks on critical infrastructure with a desire to "agree to all of Russia's conditions in order to end the war quickly."

2.3. Skepticism in the current negotiation process persisted. Most respondents (Feb. 2026: [50%](#); Mar. 2026: [71%](#); Apr. 2026: [54%](#); Apr. 2026: [60%](#); [71%](#); [74%](#)) expressed disbelief in the success of negotiations or that an agreement would be signed, at least in the near future. A [January 2026 poll](#) reported that a top reason for this attitude was the belief that Russia was acting in bad faith in the process.

2.4. A narrow majority supported holding a referendum on a prospective peace deal (Mar. 2026: [50%](#) for, [40%](#) against; Mar. 2026: [57%](#) for, [35%](#) against), though this did not indicate support for a peace deal

itself, nor clarified its contents. If the terms of potential agreement to be voted in a referendum are vaguely detailed to include "EU membership by 2027, territorial compromises, reliable security guarantees, and an economic reconstruction plan," [61%](#) of respondents of a March 2026 reported they would "vote yes."

2.5. Some parts of civil society opposed holding a peace referendum. The OPORA Civil network released a [report](#) highlighting legal and security impediments to holding such a referendum. In April 2026, 50+ Ukrainian CSOs and activists published a [statement](#) in Ukrainian that denounced holding a referendum to ratify any prospective peace treaty.

2.6. Mobilisation was listed as a concern across multiple surveys [[7](#), [8](#), [9](#)], with a [January 2026 poll](#) noting sentiment that current mobilisation practices were perceived as contributing to domestic democratic decline. Regardless, [62%](#) of respondents to a January 2026 survey said that mobilisation should continue (only [22%](#) supported exclusively voluntary enlistment), though with reforms such as clear terms of service and improved material support to the mobilised and their families. Despite battlefield shortages, [63%](#) of respondents in a January 2026 poll supported allowing men between the ages of 18-22 travel abroad.

3. SECURITY

3.1. Security remained a top priority. A February 2026 poll noted that [73%](#) of respondents rejected compromise on "real security guarantees for Ukraine" in order to sign a peace deal (only [20%](#) were willing to do so) with this resistance being higher than to any other suggested compromises.

3.2. Preferred security options continued to include a strong Ukrainian Army, stationing Western troops in Ukraine and snap-back mechanisms [[10](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13](#)], with NATO membership ranked as a [4th](#) and [5th](#) preference in different surveys. When asked, the option "[the disintegration of Russia](#)" was the most preferred.

3.3. Resistance to transferring all of Donbas to Russian control in exchange for security guarantees increased when the security guarantees on offer were specified to match those suggested by the United States (from [57%](#) to [68%](#), Feb. 2026). These included no US troops stationed in Ukraine, no closing the skies and no weapons aid.

4. TERRITORIAL CONTROL

4.1. Preserving sovereignty and independence, and mitigating loss of life were prioritised over territorial recovery [[14](#), [15](#)], though the expulsion of Russian troops from the 1991 borders or the pre-2022 line of control was still considered a key component of [victory](#) or a [prospective peace deal](#).

4.2. Strong opposition against legal recognition of occupation remained. Most respondents in two surveys refused to recognise Crimea as Russian "to achieve peace" or "stop the war" (Jan. 2026: [70%](#); Mar. 2026: [60%](#)). At the same time, [57%](#) of respondents found acceptable a scenario in which the current front line is frozen without formal recognition of the occupied territories as Russian.

4.3. Strong, consistent resistance persisted to transferring the rest of Donbas to Russian control in exchange either for a signed agreement, a peace deal or for security guarantees. This rejection ranged from [57-75%](#) across multiple surveys from January through April 2026 [[16](#), [17](#), [18](#), [19](#)].

4.4. Factors that contributed to this resistance included believing that Russia would continue attacking after troop withdrawal, that Ukraine should not give up territories in principle or that Western security guarantees would not prove sufficient [[20](#), [21](#)].

5. ELECTIONS

5.1. Most respondents are prepared to have elections only after the war is over. In one poll, preferences for holding elections only after a final peace deal increased from [59%](#) (Dec. 2025) to [69%](#) (Mar. 2026). Resistance to holding elections now (Jan. 2026: [63%](#); Mar. 2026: [82%](#); Mar. 2026: [61%](#)) or "in the near future"/after a ceasefire (Mar. 2026: [53%](#); Mar. 2026: [57%](#); Apr. 2026: [46%](#)) remained strong.

5.2. Political competition for potential future elections increased. A narrow majority ([49%](#) for, [47%](#) against) in a January 2026 survey supported Zelenskyy running for a second term. Zelenskyy, Zaluzhnyi and Budanov remain most likely candidates for potential future presidential elections, with boxer Oleksandr Usyk emerging as a contender in the polls since February 2026. Respondents expressed a desire to vote for new political faces [[22](#), [23](#), [24](#)], particularly from the military [[25](#), [26](#), [27](#)].