



History. People. Events.

**Research report  
on the memory of contemporary Poles and Ukrainians**



Warsaw, 2018



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Joanna Konieczna-Sałamatin  
Natalia Otrishchenko  
Tomasz Stryjek

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INSTYTUT STUDIÓW POLITYCZNYCH  
POLSKIEJ AKADEMII NAUK

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Project manager: dr hab. Tomasz Stryjek, Professor at the IPS with the PAS

Research team responsible for the surveys presented in the report:

- dr hab. Joanna Konieczna-Sałamatin, Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw
- dr Natalia Otrishchenko, Center for Urban History of East Central Europe, Lviv
- dr. Volodymyr Sklokin, Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv

Authors of the report:

- Joanna Konieczna-Sałamatin
- Tomasz Stryjek
- Natalia Otrishchenko

Translated by: CHOICES Łukasz Pakuła

Cover design: kotNaPunkcie

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## About the project

The image of the past is playing an increasingly important role in people's identification with their own national and state community and the mutual perception of Poles and Ukrainians. We have been observing this tendency in Poland since 2001 and the first discussion of Jedwabne, as well as 2003 and the sixtieth anniversary of the Volhynia crime. In Ukraine, the trend has been growing since the 2004 Orange Revolution. Previous research has shown that in the Polish public opinion, the image of no other nation but Ukrainians is shaped so strongly under the influence of the recent historical conflicts<sup>1</sup> (Troszyński, 2016). In turn, the identity of modern Ukrainians seems to be less dependent on beliefs about history than that of Poles; rather, it is associated with the hope of building a state that satisfies their expectations. Nevertheless, in both countries, the rulers are pursuing a policy of remembrance referring to unilateral interpretations of events in the 20th century history, with the view of both heroisation and martyrdom of their own nation. This approach to the past has intensified after the 2014 Ukrainian Euromaidan and the beginning of the rule of Law and Justice party in Poland, a year later.

The media – including new media, where the boundaries between speakers and recipients are blurred – also create images of the past with the abovementioned meaning and significance. Because of strong politicization and medialisation of public life, professional historians in both countries find it increasingly difficult to present their findings to the public. The roles played by historians themselves have also been changing since the Central and Eastern European countries began to pay more attention to the policy of remembrance, which was manifested, among others, by establishment of institutes of national remembrance (Poland – 2000, Ukraine – 2006). Some of them serve the particular interests of their states rather than the universal mission of science.

A research project devoted to the study of the relationships between the public opinion, historians, education, media and politics as well as structural similarities and differences between historical culture in Poland and Ukraine is entitled *Historical Cultures in Transition: Negotiating Memory, History and Identity in the Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* (No. UMO-2016/21/B/HS3/03415). It is financed by the National Science Centre and implemented by the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences and Collegium Civitas in the years 2017-2020.

This document is a report from surveys carried out in both countries as the most important element of the first part of the project. At the same time, these were the first quantitative comparative studies of the collective memory of Poles and Ukrainians. They were carried out in January and February 2018.

<sup>1</sup> The quoted report by Marek Troszyński ([http://siectolerancji.pl/sites/default/files/st\\_raport\\_ukraincy.pdf](http://siectolerancji.pl/sites/default/files/st_raport_ukraincy.pdf) – accessed on 10/07/2018) analyzes opinions of Poles regarding Ukrainian men and women, and provides an analysis and quantitative summaries of entries posted on the Polish Internet between March and August 2015.

## The most significant findings

- Ukrainians have revealed more interest in the past than Poles as regards four aspects – the past of the family, city, region and country. In both countries, the greatest interest was declared in relation to the family past (80% of Poles and 90% of Ukrainians). The past of the country is “definitely interesting” for 13% of Poles and 36% of Ukrainians. Poles less often than Ukrainians declare interest in all four aspects of the past, most likely because they think they know it. School, culture, state policy – everything tells them about the past. In Ukraine, memory and history are still an area of rivalry between the national and post-Soviet or post-imperial narratives; for this reason, Ukrainians often ask themselves questions about the past and look for information about it.
- Based on the historical assessments made by the respondents, it can be stated that the Ukrainians have a more or less agreed canon of positively-regarded characters from the pre-modern history of their country, but controversies arise when it comes to the 20th century. In addition, the Ukrainian society is very clearly divided as far as the regionally recognized “heroes” and “antiheroes” are concerned. In Poland there is a canon covering the entire history, and there are no significant social divisions regarding this canon. Polish visions of history are not clearly differentiated regionally, among generations or due to the level of education of respondents.
- In both countries, state authorities were almost equally denied the right to interpret the past: in Poland, 45% of respondents said that the Sejm and the Senate should not do this, and in Ukraine an analogous opinion was expressed by 49% of respondents. At the same time, in two cases in which we dealt with a state interpretation of the past – the assessment of the Great Famine by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and qualification of the Volhynia crime as genocide by the Sejm and the Senate in Poland – the opinions of the majority of citizens surveyed were consistent with the interpretations adopted in legal acts.
- Opinions of Poles and Ukrainians on mutual historical guilt break down symmetrically. Namely, Poles more often confirm than deny that there were such events in the history of mutual relations for which the Ukrainians should feel guilty towards Poles, while Ukrainians claim more often that certain events should be apologised for by Poles. 21% of Ukrainians and only 8% of Poles are willing to plead guilty as a nation. At the same time, among the Ukrainians, the fault of their own nation is more often recognized by those who think that it is necessary to speak openly about uncomfortable facts from their own history, than by supporters of concealing these uncomfortable facts (24% to 20%). In Poland, the opinion about such facts is unrelated with opin-



ions about Poles' faults towards Ukrainians. All this clearly shows that the "we forgive and ask for forgiveness" formula cannot be applied to the settlement of Polish and Ukrainian injustices. This formula requires at least a fundamental agreement as to who is more of an executioner and who is more of a victim. Meanwhile, in the situation of Poles and Ukrainians, each of the nations thinks that the other bears the main blame, while "we" crossed the limits of necessary defense, at most. Some are not even willing to admit that

- From this viewpoint, the actions of the Polish and Ukrainian states regarding common evaluation of history can be summarized as follows: in one state (Poland), the society – according to its own conviction – "knows" everything about history and tells an "agreed upon" version of its own history. By discussing the Volhynia events, this state presses the other (Ukraine) whose society "does not know" much about history, feels a "hunger" for it and would like to "agree" about it. Could this lead to an agreement?

## Research methodology

In both countries, the study was conducted on samples representative of adult residents of the country. In Poland, the selection of samples and field work was carried out by IQS. Interviews were carried out using the CAPI (Computer-Assisted Personal Interview) method. The random-quota sample consisted of 1,500 people. Households in which interviews could have been conducted were selected according to the random route procedure, and the starting points were determined based on the TERYT, Polish state territorial and organizational system.

In Ukraine, fieldwork was carried out by the Ukrainian Public Opinion Research Center "Socioinform". The sample consisted of 2,500 respondents and was representative of adult citizens of Ukraine (over 18 years of age), with the exception of residents of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the occupied parts of Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts, and areas under the control of the Ukrainian authorities but with a high risk of outbreak of military operations. The sample was random and stratified (oblasts, with the division into villages and towns, constituted the strata). Field tests were conducted between January 19 and February 05, 2018. The response rate was 56.5%. The weighted analysis took into account such parameters as the gender and age of the respondents. The source of data for the development of the weight was the State Statistics Service of Ukraine.

## The context of the study

One of the main hypotheses of the project under which the study was carried out, assumed that contemporary Poles are more "deeply immersed" in the history than Ukrainians, in the context of their identities. By formulating this metaphor, we wanted to express the impression that Poles, when they want to or are asked to express their identity, more often, with more emotional involvement and more explicitly refer to events from national history than do other nations, at least in Central and Eastern Europe. We have concluded this on the basis of, i.a.: the level of saturation of public debates with references to the past, the number of historical publications in the media of all kinds, and the importance that policy-makers and the state itself attach to education and popularization of historical knowledge. This hypothesis also stemmed from the conviction that one hundred years of Polish State influence on its citizens (counting from 1918, with a break only for World War II and the period after, up to 1956) greatly contributed to the deep historicalization of Poles' beliefs about themselves as members of the community, in the case of the Polish majority as well as national minorities. Given this historical factor, the identity of the citizens of Ukraine seemed to be less built on the basis of images of the past. After all, a nation state that could set such goals for itself was created there only in 1991. Earlier, the state was oriented towards shaping the Soviet identity by using images of the past in a way that was declared false and rejected in independent Ukraine.

## Description of the analytical approach and researched populations

The analyzes presented in this report distinguish several independent variables that we refer to constantly. These include:

- The region of the country – a variable adopted mainly due to the fact that in Ukrainian society it is one of the basic divisions in terms of any issues related to broadly understood public affairs. While constructing the regional division of Ukraine, we adopted the “traditional” geographical regions based on the boundaries of the oblasts, being aware that research is currently underway to verify the accuracy of such a division. In particular, the project “Region, Nation and Beyond” challenges the regional constellation of Ukraine<sup>2</sup>. In Poland, the division of the country along the lines of historical regions has been adopted.<sup>3</sup>. Regional variation in Poland is generally less noticeable than in Ukraine. Four regions have been distinguished in both countries (as presented in the map below);
- Generation (age category) – 4 generations were distinguished in each country:
  - Born before 1945.
  - Born in 1945-1970 (in Poland) and 1945-1972 (in Ukraine), marked by the end of the reign of Władysław Gomułka in Poland and Petro Shelest in Ukraine;
  - Born before the beginning of the transformation, in the years 1971-1989 in Poland and 1973-1990 in Ukraine;
  - Born during the transformation (from 1990 in Poland and from 1991 in Ukraine).

Such intergenerational boundaries were adopted with the assumption that in the lives of these four generations there were experiences that influenced the formation of a different assessment of events from the times of war and communist rule. First of all, the representatives of the first generation could remember the war or even the period before its outbreak (or obtain knowledge about it directly from their parents) and, therefore, be able to compare the post-war reality with the earlier one. In the case of Ukraine, this could also pertain to remembering Holodomor of 1932 and 1933. In turn, respondents born between 1945 and 1970/1972 in Poland were shaped to the greatest extent by the communist rule, including the period of its “nationalization” in the 1960s. In contrast, in Ukraine they experienced the end of Stalinist rule and the so-called de-Stalinization period; there were attempts to combine the official communist ideology of the USSR with the heritage of Ukrainian national culture. In both countries, the third generation was already experiencing the crisis and finally the decay of communist rule as teenagers, gaining the chance for life promotion in the transformation era. Finally, people born after 1989 or 1990 no longer knew Second World War and

<sup>2</sup> Schmid U., Myshlovska O., Scheide C. (eds), *Regionalism without regions: rethinking Ukraine's heterogeneity* (to be published)

<sup>3</sup> “Along the lines” because the borders of historical regions do not usually coincide with the voivodships, and the survey only provided information about the voivodship in which the respondent lived.

non-democratic rule directly, shaping their convictions in the era of independence of Poland and Ukraine and, for the first time in modern history, with equal status of these countries.

Map 1. Division of the analyzed countries into regions\*.



## Interest in the past

Each of us remembers our past to some extent and finds in it what is important for our current functioning and self-awareness, as well as for creating visions of our future. Sometimes we also draw from the images of the past of the community to which we belong. In contrast to a more institutionalized "history", which means a coherent narrative built by professionals based on their findings about "facts", "the past" appears as a certain repository of all events and phenomena that once took place and of which some trace remained.

The question that opened the questionnaire and aimed at introducing respondents into the context of the conversation concerned interest in various aspects of the past: the past of the family, the place where the respondent lives, the region and the country as a whole. Here, we deliberately did not ask about "history" and used the broader meaning of the term "past" instead. The question about interest is appropriate as the beginning of a long and not very easy interview and was aiming at, among others, establishment of an agreement between the pollster and the respondent.

The distribution of answers to the question about interest in various aspects of the past in Poland and Ukraine is presented in the charts.

Chart 1. Interest in various aspects of the past in Poland

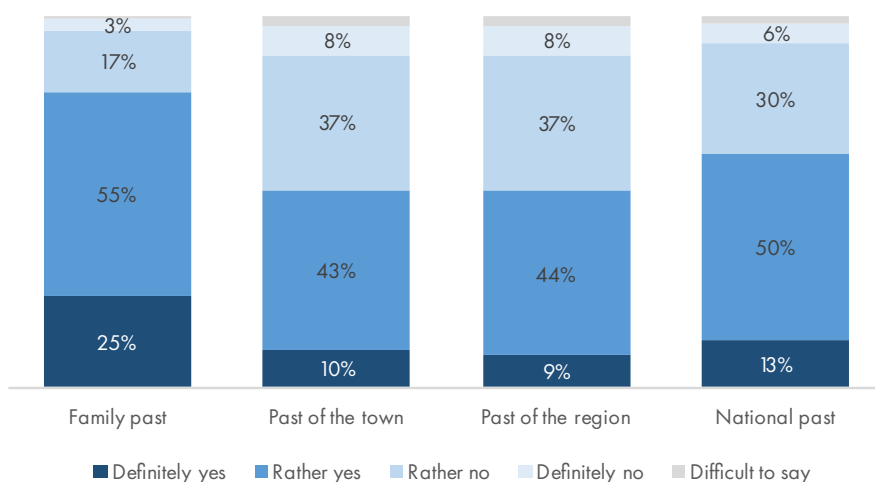
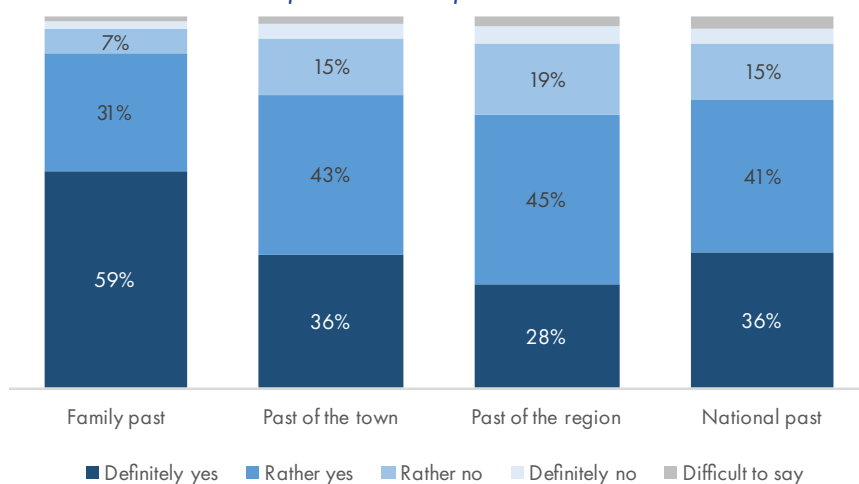


Chart 2. Interest in various aspects of the past in Ukraine



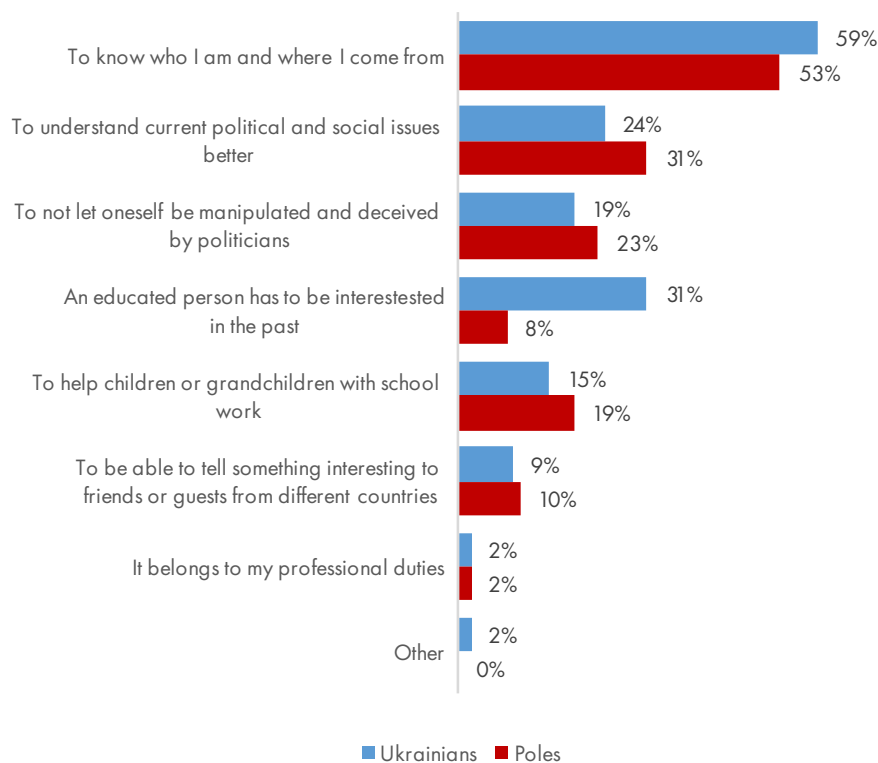
The comparison of results in both countries clearly shows that Ukrainians more often than Poles declare interest in all aspects of the past – from the private one in the family environment, through one associated with different territorial communities to the national history. The difference is particularly marked considering the most categorical “definitely yes” answer which Ukrainians choose three times more often than Poles.

Does this result undermine the hypothesis of our research project mentioned in the introduction, according to which Poles are more “immersed in the past” than Ukrainians? It does not have to; there are at least three interpretations of the observed difference. First of all, Poles may be less interested in the past because they know it – or more precisely, they think they know it, “know how it was.” School, education, culture, and state policy – everything tells them about the past. They do not have to be particularly interested in it. Ukrainians do not have all of this, or they think they do not have it. In Ukraine, memory and history are still areas of rivalry and negotiation between national and post-Soviet/post-imperial narratives. In other words, both history and especially memory as being more inherently subject to change, are undergoing a reinterpretation process.

At the same time, the inhabitants of Ukraine are convinced that they live in times of historical importance (as shall be discussed later), and therefore Ukraine is in a situation of “unfinished past,” and “history that is happening right now.” Ukrainian respondents somehow feel the presence of the past in their own experience, and therefore they would like to use it in order to talk about the present. Thirdly, the interest in the past is part of “cultural norms” in Ukrainian society, and being interested in it is simply a right thing to do. Almost one third of Ukrainian respondents believe that “an educated person has to be interested in the past.” In Poland, only 8% of respondents chose such an answer.

Why is it worth being interested in the past? While answering such a question, respondents could choose up to two responses from the list or give their own. In both countries the most popular answer was “to know who I am and where I come from”. Over half of respondents chose it, 59% in Ukraine and 53% in Poland. Among the Ukrainians, the second most frequent option was “an educated person has to be interested in the past”, while Poles turned out to be more sensitive to the political instrumentalization of the past and pointed out that the motivation for interest in the past is a need to better understand contemporary social and political events (31% of indications in Poland, 24% in Ukraine) or opposition to the manipulations of politicians (23% and 19% respectively). Every ninth Pole (11%) and every sixteenth Ukrainian (6%) did not specify any reason why it is worth being interested in the past.

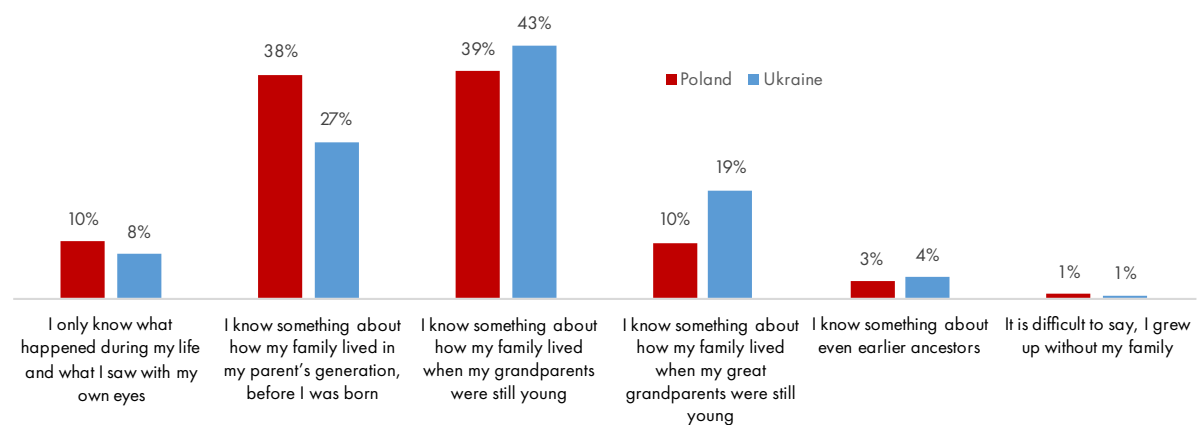
*Chart 3. Reasons why you should be interested in the past*



Note: the answers do not add up to 100%, because it was possible to indicate up to two answers

As we have already mentioned, the past of the family turned out to be the most interesting aspect of the past in both studied societies (regardless of the region of residence and generation). It seems, therefore, that the respondents should at the same time be well-versed in what the life of previous generations looked like. The responses of Poles and Ukrainians are consistent with declarations regarding interest: Ukrainians more often than Poles pointed to knowledge reaching back to the times of great-grandparents or even earlier. The knowledge of Poles – according to their own declarations – more often concerned the modern times, or possibly the respondents’ parents’ life. It is also interesting to note that in Ukraine the younger respondents (born after 1970) were able to go further in the past, while in Poland the knowledge about generations of grandparents and great-grandparents was declared more often by the older than the younger interviewees. It is possible that the observed differences result from the fact that Ukrainians have been asking their grandparents and great-grandparents about Holodomor for about a decade. Earlier, the majority did not talk about it until President Yushchenko included Holodomor in the public discourse and proposed public commemoration. Even today it still is a trauma not tamed by cinema and popular culture, and it remains a topic for conversation with the older generation. Poles do not ask about World War II that often anymore, probably mainly due to the fact that numerous films about the war and its particular events (Katyń, Volhynia) have been made.

*Chart 4. How far does the memory of the family's past go?*



Of course, we do not know precisely what the respondents meant when they spoke about “knowledge” about the life of previous generations. Were they talking only about certain events from the lives of previous generations, or about the comprehensive knowledge concerning the fate of their family members? The results, however, point to the greater importance attached to the past by Ukrainians, at least at the level of declarations in the survey. Potentially, this is also a testimony to an intergenerational transmission of knowledge, when the stories of older generations supplemented knowledge about history or proposed an alternative narrative. The democratization of the Ukrainian society after 1991 opened the

possibility of public debate about the difficult past of the country and the memory policy pursued by the Soviet authorities. At that time, the ideological decolonization of memory began at both the national and local level (Sereda, 2009). Family stories became one of the important tools of this process. Through them, experiences pushed to the margin of memory were transferred.

The respondents indicated the importance of communicative memory (Assmann, 2009) more often in Ukraine than in Poland. For the researchers this was a certain surprise, because at the stage of formulating hypotheses we assumed that the more oppressive communist regime in the former country contributed to the “forgetting” of the past by the inhabitants to a greater extent. Nevertheless, we think that noticing this difference allows us to see the much greater role of state institutions in the formation of cultural memory in Poland, which also was our hypothesis. It is most likely that communicative memory in Poland is under a stronger influence of cultural memory. In other words, the stories of witnesses are more often mediated by images conveyed by the state and the media, which they themselves are not necessarily aware of.

Ukrainians are inclined to see their own lives and lives of relatives in a wider historical context today. Over half of the respondents (57%) indicated that some event from the past directly affected them or their relatives. In Poland, only 29% of respondents expressed such a view. In both countries a very similar tendency can be seen: the older the respondents, the more often they claimed that their families were involved in historical events. A significant part of those mentioned by the Ukrainians took place in the last 25 years, for instance the collapse of the Soviet Union, independence, Orange Revolution, the Maidan of 2013 and 2014, the ATO in Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Most often, however, events from the Second World War (or just this war itself) were pointed out. Poles, like the Ukrainians, most often recalled the events of the Second World War, with the introduction of martial law of 1981 indicated as the most current.

These results show that Poles feel more distanced to “the great history”, and the boundary between the past and the present is established earlier. Contrastively, Ukrainians are living “in” history right now, or at least many of them perceive their lives so. This, to some extent, explains the earlier discussed greater interest in the past in Ukraine in comparison with Poland. In both countries, those who said that history affected the lives of their families more often expressed interest in all aspects of the past. Perhaps this relationship should be interpreted differently; people who were interested in the past (especially that of their family) more often knew that the past happened and that their family participated in historical events.



## Sources of knowledge about the past

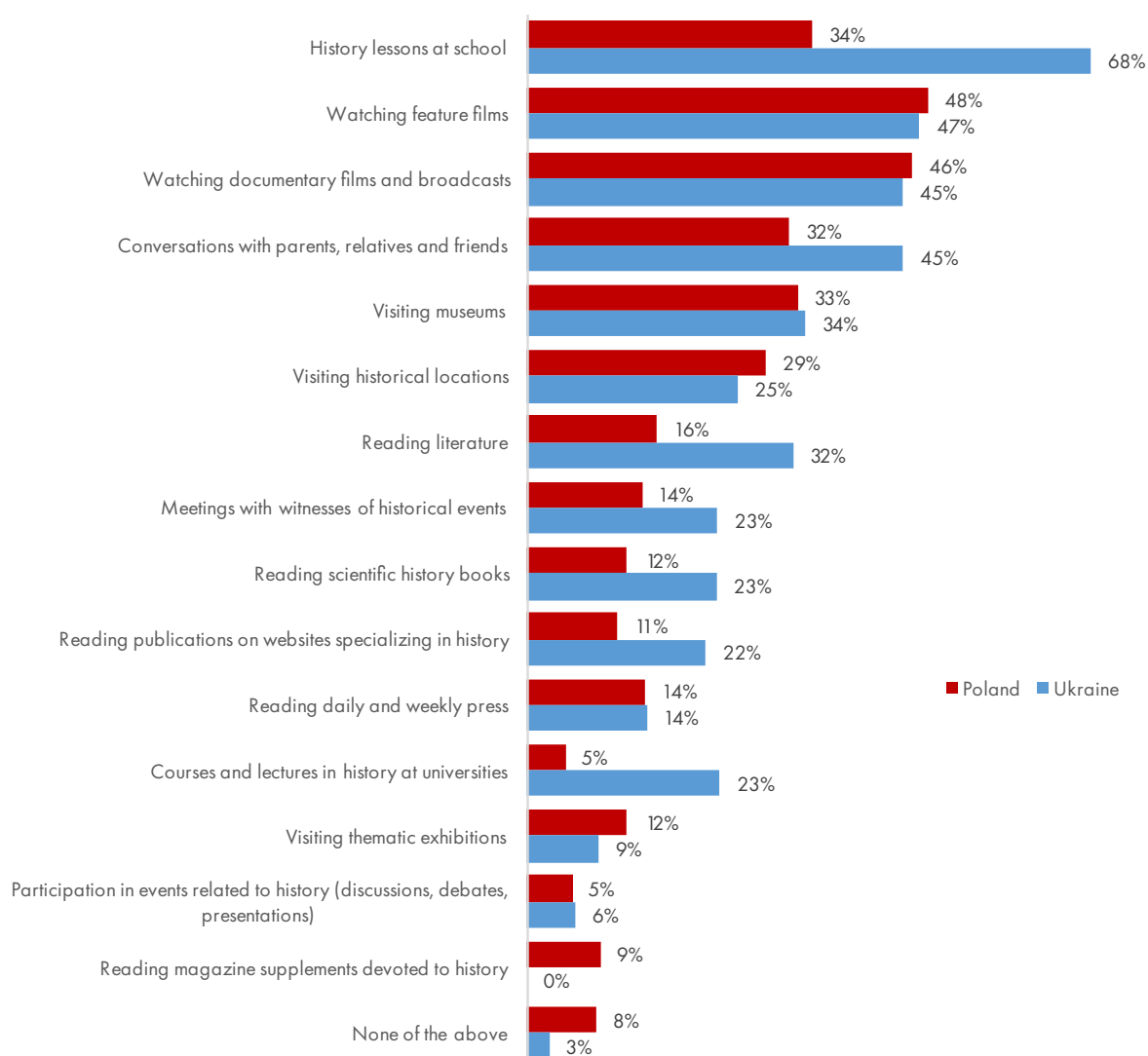
Knowledge about the past can be derived from various sources. The school is the most natural one, as almost everyone experiences it. It provides information consistent with the curriculum approved by state institutions, and thus historical knowledge which seems most important from the point of view of the state. However, this knowledge can also be derived from other sources, for example, from culture or already discussed personal contacts with family or witnesses of historical events. In our study, respondents received a list of 15 sources, from which they could possibly have learned about the past. Ukrainians have indicated more sources than Poles there (on average, Ukrainians pointed to 4.2, and Poles – 3.1 sources). Moreover, 9% of Poles and only 3% of Ukrainians have not chosen any source from the proposed list.

Differences between the frequency of indications of individual sources in the countries surveyed are very telling. Ukrainians learn about history primarily from school (68%), while Poles – from culture (48% indicated feature films, and 44% documentary films. These were the most frequent answers). Institutionalized sources such as schools or museums took further places in the popularity ranking among Poles. Cultural sources in Ukraine were indicated as often as in Poland, but their relative importance in the list of sources turned out to be smaller.

The whole list also reveals that in Ukraine the knowledge provided by educational institutions is more important than in Poland. Both school history lessons and academic textbooks were indicated twice as often by Ukrainians as by Poles. It is also worth noting that although Ukrainians indicate more sources than Poles, which would indicate a tendency to diversify information channels, in Poland none of the sources dominate others as much as school history lessons in Ukraine. In Ukraine, conversations with family, relatives and friends were also an important source, as they were mentioned almost as often as films.

History lessons at school, classes at universities and museums were more often chosen by representatives of the younger generation in both countries. For older respondents, personal communication was more important, in the form of meetings with witnesses of history or family meetings. For rather obvious reasons, younger people more often than the elderly indicated the Internet, whereas people born before 1972 had a greater tendency to learn from television. In Poland, one could also notice an increased tendency of older generations to select printed sources, such as scientific books, literature and thematic magazine supplements. In Ukraine, intergenerational differences in the frequency of selecting printed sources turned out to be insignificant.

Chart 5. Sources of knowledge about the past in Poland and Ukraine



Different sources of information only then can be important for shaping attitudes and images of the past in the perception of citizens, if they enjoy the trust of recipients. For this reason, we asked the Poles and Ukrainians about the credibility of their sources, which could be assessed on a scale of 1 (“completely unreliable”) to 5 (“completely reliable”). It turned out that in Poland the trust in almost all sources of knowledge about the past is higher than in Ukraine. Therefore, Ukrainians use more sources than Poles, but they believe them to a lesser extent, and perhaps because of this lack of trust they reach for further sources. About a quarter of Poles and Ukrainians surveyed did not recognize any source as “completely reliable”.

Considering three sources which in both countries are perceived as the most reliable (family, museums and witnesses), in Poland the views on them are practically not differentiated among generations or regions. In contrast, in Ukraine there are clear generational differences in the assessment of the reliability of information received from relatives: 47% of respondents born before 1945 and only every third born in the time of independence gives

the family the highest trust score. Apparently, young people are more critical about what they learn about history from their relatives.

## Practices related to the past

Interest in the past manifests itself in many ways, some of which have already been discussed: broadening one's own knowledge through formal and informal learning, reading, visiting museums, watching movies, etc. Another way to manifest interest in the past is to celebrate holidays and days of remembrance related to historical events and to visit places important for the national history. Such types of past-related activities were also included in our survey. The respondents received a list of holidays and memorial days, and each of them had to say whether they celebrate the day; know it, but do not care; or have never heard about it.

Holidays that have the status of non-working days in Ukraine include the Women's Day on March 8, Workers' Solidarity Day on May 1, Victory Day on May 9, Constitution Day on June 28 and Independence Day on August 24. In turn, in Poland they include the Labor Day on May 1, the 3<sup>rd</sup> May Constitution Day, Armed Forces Day on August 15 and National Independence Day on November 11.

In both Poland and Ukraine, the most popular holiday was the International Women's Day (March 8), as 77% of Poles and 78% of Ukrainians declared celebrating it. However, this is where the similarities in celebrations in both countries end. In Ukraine, the 9<sup>th</sup> of May (Day of Victory over Fascism during World War II) was listed by 70% of respondents. It belongs to the set of holidays that used to be celebrated in the Soviet era.

In Poland, holidays indicated by relatively many people (63% of respondents) belonged to a set of holidays related to national history and only acknowledged after 1989. In Ukraine, there are attempts to replace the Victory Day of the Soviet era with the Day of Remembrance and Reconciliation (8 May), but its popularity is much lower. Only every fifth respondent declared that they celebrated it, although 62% of them marked it as familiar.

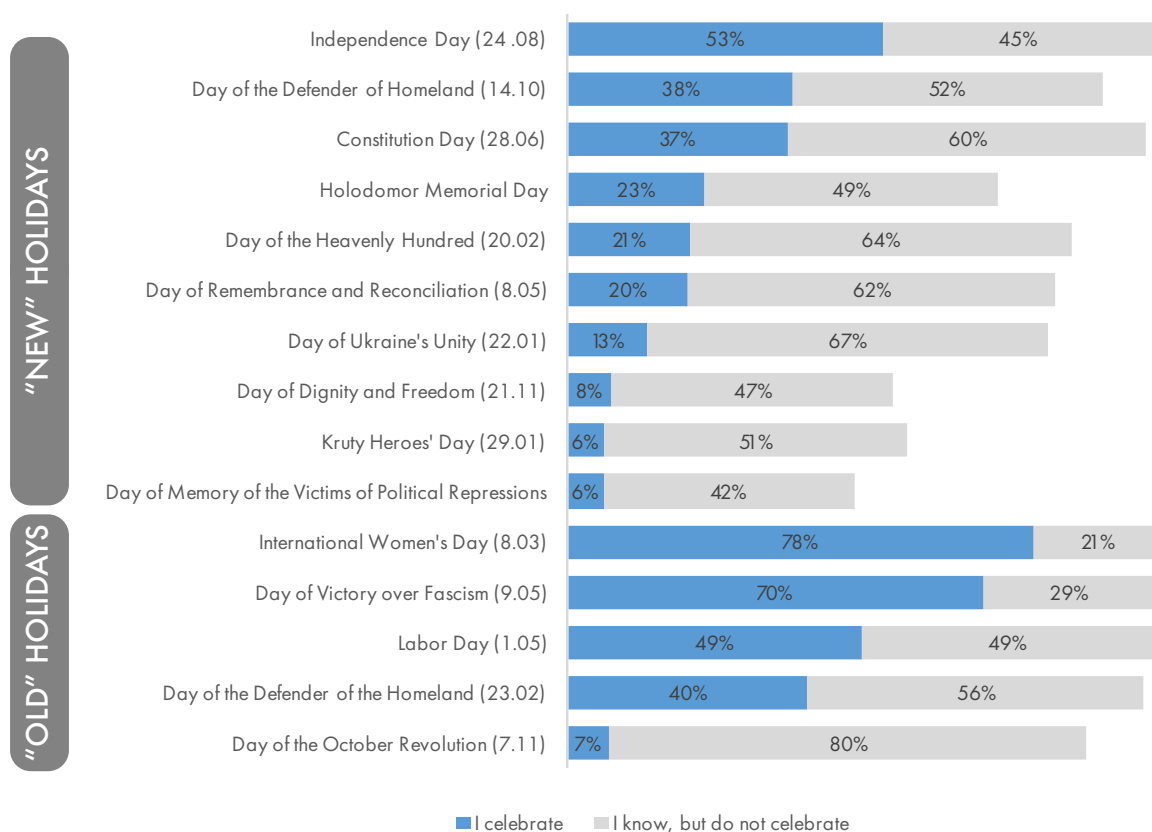
In the context of the war in the Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts, one would expect that a significant number of Ukrainian respondents would like to celebrate the Day of Ukraine Defender (October 14). Although it is the third in terms of frequency of celebrations established in the period of independent Ukraine, it has not yet been able to instil itself in citizens' consciousness, as it was officially established by president Petro Poroshenko only in 2014. 38% of respondents celebrate it, and another 52% recognise it, but do not celebrate. Similar is the attitude of Ukrainians towards the Defender of the Fatherland Day (February 23) dating back to Soviet times – it is celebrated by 40% of the interviewees and 56% know about it. In the USSR, this day was also celebrated as the Men's Day which is probably continued by a significant part of those 40% who still treat it as a holiday in Ukraine. For comparison, the Day of the Polish Army (August 15) is celebrated by a relatively small number of Poles: less than a third. Another 57% of respondents are aware of its existence. In Poland, the Armed Forces

Day is celebrated on August 15 from 1992, when it was restored after a 45-year-long break. In the times of the Second Polish Republic, the day was celebrated as a Soldier's Day and this tradition was continued until 1947. At the same time a traditional and "new" holiday, as it was established in the period of transformation.

In Ukraine, we may observe a "double canon" in which "new" and "old" holidays overlap, and each of these sets has a specific historical connotation. It is also noticeable that the "old" holidays are generally better known to Ukrainians than the "new ones". There is nothing surprising in this, because after the transformation only those of the old holidays remained which were also significant in the new state canon of history and enjoyed popularity.

The division into "old" and "new" holidays is based on when a given holiday was established: whether it happened during the Soviet period or after Ukraine gained independence. The "new" holidays are primarily martyrological dates – the Day of Remembrance of the Holodomor Victims, the Day of the Heavenly Hundred, the Kruty Heroes' Day, and the Day of Memory of the Victims of Political Repression and World War II (Day of Remembrance and Reconciliation). The remaining five holidays directly concern Ukrainian statehood and its protection.

Chart 6. Popularity of public holidays and memorial days in Ukraine



Note: The Day of the October Revolution (celebrated until 1991) and the Day of the Defender of the Homeland of February 23 (established in the USSR to commemorate the creation of the Red Army in 1918, valid until 2014) are not state holidays in Ukraine anymore. The survey featured them as we aimed to check for how many Ukrainians they would still have a festive character.

The regional differentiation between the “new” and “old” canon of holidays is quite significant – the frequency of celebrating “new” holidays decreases from west to east and from north to south, and it is also inversely proportional to the frequency of celebrating “old” holidays. Hence, we can talk about a certain “substitution” of canons observed in Ukraine. The phenomenon has been presented on a map where the average number of holidays from both canons celebrated by the inhabitants of four Ukrainian regions was placed. It can be noticed that the western region is the only one in which “new” holidays are celebrated more often than “old ones”, while the inhabitants of the south of the country seem the most reluctant to “new” holidays.

Map 2. Average numbers of “new” and “old” holidays celebrated in the regions of Ukraine

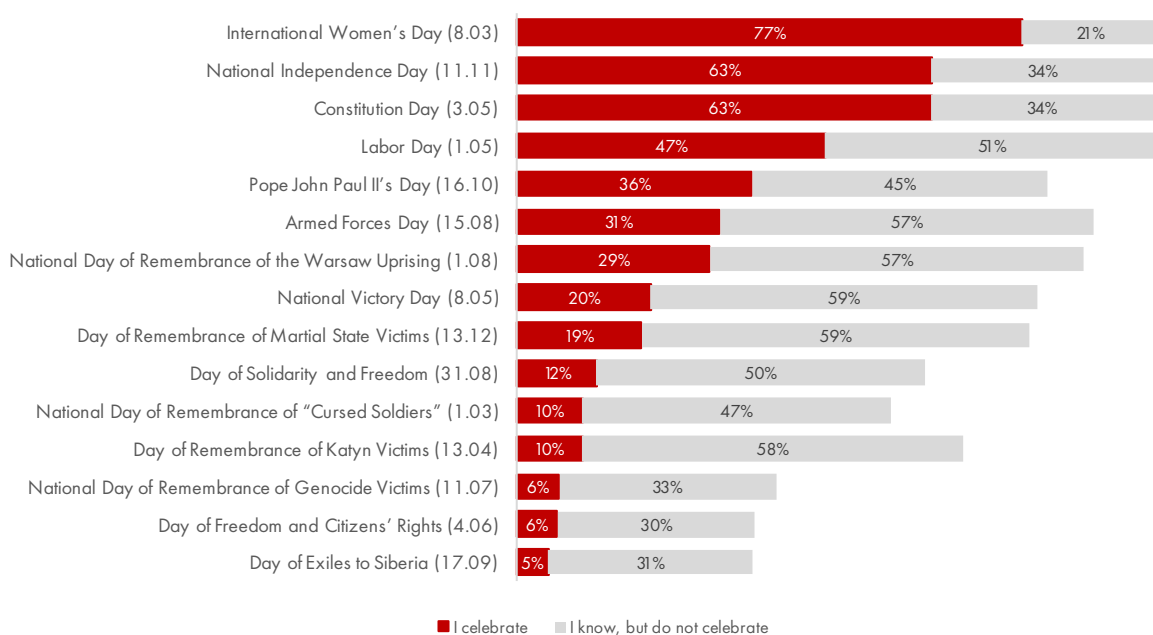


Note: There were 10 “new” holidays and only 5 “old” ones

There is no division into “old” and “new” holidays in Poland. While May 3 and November 11 were also celebrated in the Second Polish Republic, no holiday or memorial day remain that would be celebrated at the state level before the fall of communism, apart from the Women’s Day and Labour Day. It is also worth noting that both above holidays are taking on a new meaning today. On March 8, feminist communities organize demonstrations and events to bring rulers’ attention to women’s rights and gender issues, and on May 1, left-wing parties try to remind people of the rights of the working class. This has nothing to do with the former communist way of celebrating these days.

As for the days of remembrance that were established after the fall of communism and that remained working days, in both countries they are celebrated at a comparable, rather low level.

Chart 7. Popularity of national holidays and memorial days in Poland



## Beliefs and knowledge about the past

To examine the ideas and knowledge about different periods in the history of Poland and Ukraine, respondents were asked to react to a certain number of historical figures (they were to determine whether they felt sympathy or dislike to a given person). Further, they were to assess the impact of various events, phenomena, and processes from the past on the fate of the country and its inhabitants. The impact was assessed as positive or negative. For both characters and events, it was also possible to provide a “neutral” answer (that is, express indifference to the figure or recognize the impact of the phenomenon as neutral).

In each country, the list of figures, events and phenomena was different, but the selection aimed to preserve a certain kind of cross-national symmetry concerning the role and significance of these figures or events. Historians from both countries were consulted when compiling the lists. Naturally, the assumption that the responses to the questions will present a picture of the historical memory of both societies could only be tested to a certain extent. When comparing the level of knowledge and the way Poles or Ukrainians evaluate the past events, it should be remembered that the results obtained are largely a function of what has been proposed in the survey.

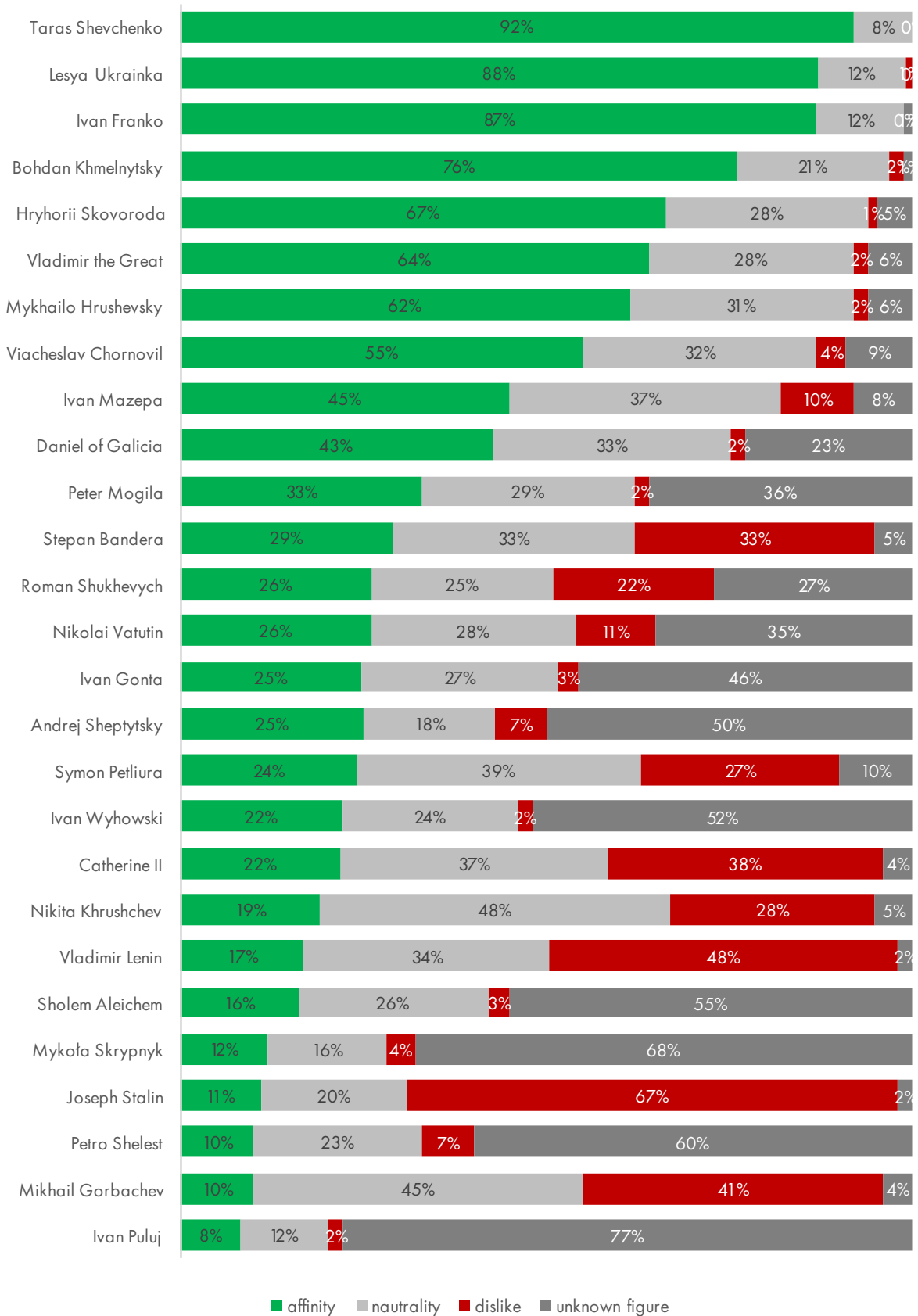
The figures were selected to cover the whole period of history of both countries. They are discussed during school history or literature courses (thus, they would be known to people who are not professionally involved in history). Different social roles, such as politicians, soldiers, culture creators and scientists were taken into account. Events and phenomena, in turn, concerned only the history of the 20th century.

As a result, a list of 27 figures and 13 events and phenomena was created for respondents from both countries.

### Attitude towards historical figures

When comparing opinions of Poles and Ukrainians about selected figures from the history of their countries, one can first of all notice the fact that Poles have a slightly more numerous set of characters whose assessment is, in a certain sense, socially agreed upon. This applies both to “heroes” (assessed mostly positively) and “antiheroes” (people assessed negatively).

Chart 8. Attitude towards historical figures in Ukraine





The above chart shows that Ukrainians have a more or less agreed canon of characters from the past history, while there is more controversy when it comes to the 20th century or modern times. Among the heroes (i.e., figures that were considered positive by more than half of the respondents), only the writer and national ideologist from Galicia, Ivan Franko, and the historian and leader of the Ukrainian People’s Republic in 1917-1918, Mykhailo Hrushevsky, partially lived in the 20th century (the former passed away in 1916, the latter in 1934). Viacheslav Chornovil (1937-1999), dissident in Soviet times and from 1991 the leader of the democratic camp, also belongs to the modern times.

The antiheroes (people to whom at least a half of the respondents reacted with antipathy) include only Joseph Stalin, treated with hostility by two-thirds of Ukrainians. Vladimir Lenin was considered a negative figure by 48% of respondents, and may thus be almost counted among the antiheroes, and Mikhail Gorbachev was also judged negatively by a relatively high number of respondents (41%).

The regional diversity of the sets of heroes and antiheroes is quite telling. The table below presents the figures perceived most positively in particular regions of Ukraine. Taras Shevchenko, Lesya Ukrainka and Ivan Franko, who took first places in all regions, were omitted in this list, and 7 figures occupy successive places in the ranking based on the percentage of people declaring a liking for them.

*Table 2. Regional diversity of heroes (characters considered positive)*

	West		Center
Viacheslav Chornovil	80%	Bohdan Khmelnytsky	81%
Bohdan Khmelnytsky	79%	Gregory Skovoroda	74%
Mykhailo Hrushevsky	75%	Mykhailo Hrushevsky	69%
Vladimir the Great	73%	Vladimir the Great	65%
Daniel of Galicia	70%	Viacheslav Chornovil	63%
Gregory Skovoroda	70%	Ivan Mazepa	55%
Stepan Bandera	66%	Daniel of Galicia	45%
	South		East
Bohdan Khmelnytsky	72%	Bohdan Khmelnytsky	68%
Vladimir the Great	56%	Gregory Skovoroda	59%
Gregory Skovoroda	53%	Vladimir the Great	58%
Catherine II	47%	Mykhailo Hrushevsky	50%
Nikolai Vatutin	46%	Catherine II	36%
Mykhailo Hrushevsky	41%	Viacheslav Chornovil	32%
Viacheslav Chornovil	32%	Ivan Mazepa	28%

Let us note the similarity of the list of the most respected figures in the west and in the center of the country. The difference between these regions is actually that in the central region Ivan Mazepa, Hetman of Zaporizhian Sich and the leader of the uprising against Tsar Peter I of 1709 replaced the leader of OUN Stepan Bandera (1909-1959) who took the seventh place in the West. The other figures are the same, although they differ slightly in the percentage of people feeling positively about them. On the other hand, the canon of figures assessed favorably in the East differs from the central region by only one person, again. Nevertheless, this is a more significant difference. Daniel of Galicia, the ruler of the western territories of Ukraine in the first half of the 13th century, has been replaced by Catherine II (reigning from 1762 to 1796). She contributed to the development of this region, among others by Yekaterinoslav (nowadays called Dnipro), but she also constitutes a symbol of the Russian Empire to a greater or lesser extent. Finally, the southern region differs from the East by the fact that Mazepa does not belong to the first seven, replaced by the Soviet general Nikolai Vatutin who in 1944 was killed in the ambush of an UPA unit. We see, therefore, that in terms of collective memory in Ukraine there is a whole range of interregional differences; however, they are nowhere large enough to confirm the validity of the “two Ukraines” concept. It must be remembered, however, that this concept once proposed by Mykola Ryabchuk<sup>4</sup> was largely a metaphor, although it reflected reality by pinpointing the large differences between opposing extremities, i.e. Galicia on one side, and Donbas or Crimea on the other.

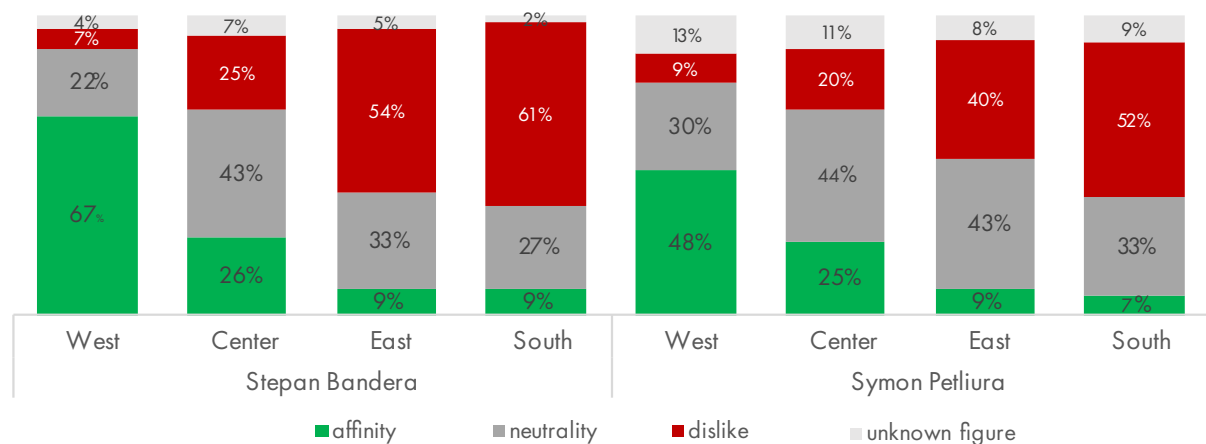
At this point, it is worth paying attention to two figures important for the Polish discourse on Ukraine: Stepan Bandera and Symon Petliura, the leader of the Directorate of Ukraine in the years 1919-1926. Both are known to the vast majority of Ukrainians (only 5% do not know Bandera, and only 10% Petliura), and are judged in similar way: approximately one-third of respondents declares approval, one-third dislike and one-third indifference. The exact data have been provided on the chart above. Such a distribution itself shows that the figures are not unifying Ukrainians, and the regional diversity of attitudes towards them indicates that they currently do not have the potential to become national Ukrainian heroes.

Both leaders enjoy the greatest sympathy in the western part of the country, and the smallest in the south and east. The comparison of attitudes towards these two characters can be considered as an argument for the thesis that the liking for Bandera is not generally a manifestation of anti-Polish attitudes. While Petliura communicated with Poles, Bandera fought with them, yet they both enjoy recognition in the western part of the country. Furthermore, Petliura agreed to recognize Polish rights to a part of Ukraine in an alliance made with Piłsudski on April 20, 1920, in exchange for military assistance and a joint expedition on the Dnieper to free the majority of the territory of the Ukrainian People’s Republic from the Bolsheviks. Following that, the authorities of the Western Ukrainian People’s Republic (WUPR,

<sup>4</sup> Ryabchuk, M. (1992). *Two Ukraines?* East European Reporter, 4, 18–22

existing from 1918) which included Eastern Galicia, returned to the independent struggle for independence and repealed previous year's act including this region in the UPR. Considering the above, today's twice as often positive assessment of Petliura by Western Ukrainians in comparison with the Center can be explained by the fact that he is an anti-Soviet symbol just like Bandera. Secondly, Western Ukrainians attribute high importance to their national identification and Petliura's determination to form the state, and therefore, they are ready to "forget" that for the good of the national cause he decided to sacrifice his native land. On the other hand, a very low level of approval towards both these leaders in the East and the South can be explained primarily by the impact of the unambiguously negative assessment of them by the USSR and then by modern Russia.

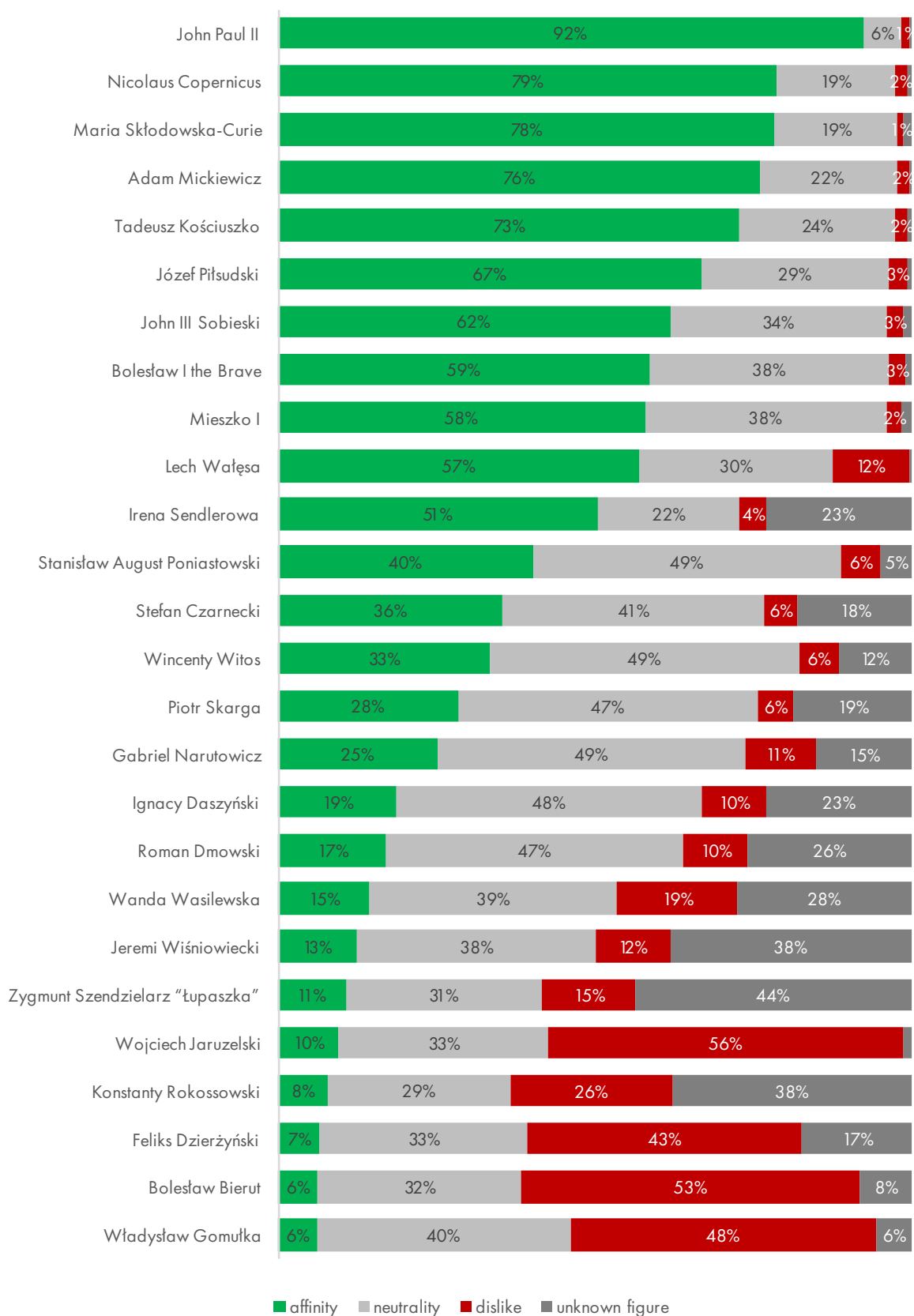
Chart 9. Regional diversity of attitudes towards Stepan Bandera and Symon Petliura



In Poland, the attitude towards historical figures differs slightly from that presented in Ukraine. First and foremost, the number of heroes (figures approved of by more than half of respondents) is clearly higher. Further, these figures represent all major historical periods, from the beginnings of the Polish state to modern times. It should also be noted that there are two scientists among the most esteemed people: Maria Skłodowska-Curie and Nicolaus Copernicus. The position of the two best illustrates that the Polish dominance over Ukraine in the field of the policy of memory and branding policy with the help of historical symbols results primarily from its length: in Poland, it has been conducted for a hundred years, while in Ukraine for a little more than twenty. Another factor is the policy's effectiveness. The Ukrainian physicist Ivan Puluj (1845-1918), a pioneer in the use of X rays for medical imaging, when introduced to our study turned out to be unknown to 77% of respondents.

Furthermore, the Polish list of antiheroes (whom more than half of respondents dislike) is slightly also longer than in Ukraine, although the difference is not as clear here. Poles and Ukrainians are similar in choosing their antiheroes from among figures from the communist era.

Chart 10. Attitude towards historical figures in Poland



It is significant, however, that in Poland the canon of figures, both respected and rejected, is not subject to such variations as in Ukraine. It is difficult to distinguish such social categories in Poland which would differ from each other with a set of recognized "heroes" and "antiheroes" in the same way as in Ukraine. At most, figures where the ratio of answers was the most diverse may be indicated.

Zygmunt Szendzielarz (nom de guerre "Łupaszka"), commander of a Home Army unit and then a "cursed soldier" was poorly known to Poles regardless of their education. However, the group of people with university diplomas was the only one in which the percentage of affinity and dislike was the same (17%). In the other groups, the aversion prevailed over positive feelings. In all groups the most common answer was "I do not know this person", and neutral attitude was in the second place in terms of the frequency of indications.

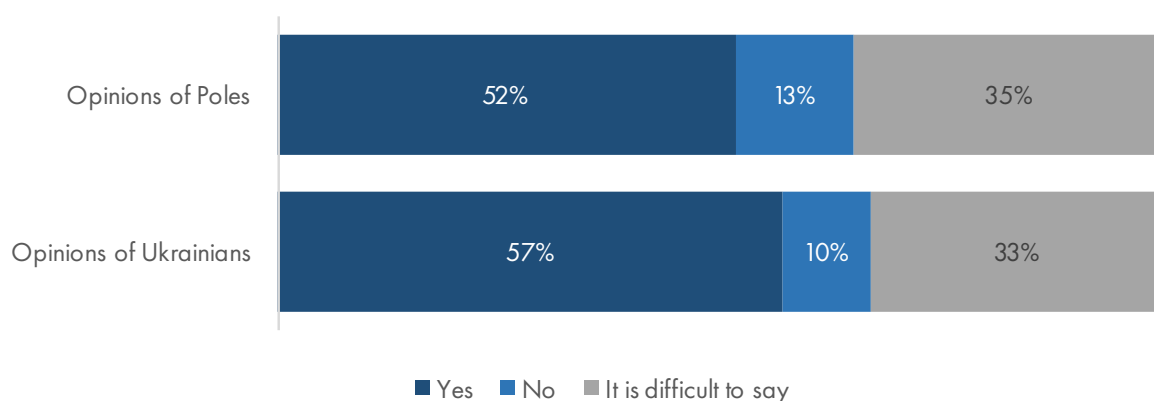
There were also two figures in relation to which regional differences were found: Irena Sendler and Lech Wałęsa, the leader of "Solidarity" and the President of the Third Polish Republic. Both of them were most often appreciated in the former Prussian partition, where 71% liked Sendlerowa, and 75% – Wałęsa. In the remaining regions, the level of positive feelings towards Wałęsa ranged at 50%, while for Sendlerowa it ranged from 32% in Galicia to 55% in former Congress Poland.

The most distinct generational differentiation, however, was noted in relation to the commander of the People's Polish Army and the President of Poland in the years 1989 to 1990, Wojciech Jaruzelski. 18% of the oldest and only 5% of the youngest respondents declared they appreciated him. Generally speaking, the youngest respondents relatively more often than other age categories did not know the characters enumerated in the questionnaire; this applies also to the surveyed Ukrainians.

### Perception of facts, phenomena and events from the history of the 20th century

The notions about and evaluation of the past are not constituted only by attitudes to historical figures, but also by knowledge and opinions about various events and processes that took place in the past. At the beginning of the survey, respondents were asked whether in the years 1917-1921 (in Ukraine) and 1918-1921 (in Poland) there were any events important for the history of their countries. The distribution of answers is presented in the chart.

Chart 11. Were there any important events in the history of Ukraine and Poland in the years 1917-1921 / 1918-1921?



In both countries, over half of the respondents declared they heard about important events. Interviewees in Poland answered that nothing important happened during that period somewhat more often than in Ukraine, but in general the distribution of responses in both countries was similar.

Interestingly, in both countries the youngest respondents least often remembered that something important happened in the discussed period (“yes” was given as an answer by 41% of Poles born after 1990 and 49% of Ukrainians). This is puzzling considering that these people had to learn about these events relatively recently, at school. Poles and Ukrainians who declared “definite interest” in the past of their country clearly knew more about historical events from the beginning of the 20th century. In this group, 68% of Poles and 63% of Ukrainians answered “yes” to the question analyzed here.

Those who answered in the affirmative were asked to indicate these “important events”. The Poles most often mentioned:

- Regaining independence, the beginning of Poland’s independence – 55% of responses (all percentages were calculated for those who answered “yes” to the question about events);
- The Polish-Bolshevik war, the miracle on the Vistula, the Battle of Warsaw – 24% of responses
- The end of World War I – 19% of indications;
- Uprising (in Wielkopolska and Silesia) – 15% of indications.

The responses of the Ukrainians were more diverse (apart from a significant percentage of indications for the October Revolution), with many events enumerated by only several people. The most common answers were as follows:

- The October Revolution – 47% of indications (among those who answered “yes” to the question about events);

- Civil war – 10% of responses;
- ZUNR, UNR, Act Zluky, the Fourth Universal<sup>5</sup> – 9% of indications;
- The end of World War I – 7% of indications;
- The fight for independence of Ukraine, the battle of Kruty – 4% of indications.

The events remembered by Poles and Ukrainians reveal once again the already mentioned differences in the extent to which the picture of the past is cohesive for citizens of both countries. Poles have a narrative about Poland's history that is to a large extent agreed upon. It includes regaining independence in 1918, the Battle of Warsaw of 1920 and a few less known events. The Ukrainians do not have yet such a story common to the inhabitants of the whole country. At the most, the remnants of the Soviet narrative are common – such frequent mentioning of the October Revolution should rather be classified as what is left of the Soviet narrative, although undoubtedly the revolution itself was an important event for the history of Ukraine.

In the discussed survey, respondents were also asked to react to 13 phenomena, events and processes covering the 20th-century history of Poland and Ukraine. Different processes were analysed for particular countries. During their selection, attention was paid to issues that firstly seem important for the assessment of historical Polish-Ukrainian relations, and, secondly, those that in recent years have aroused much controversy in the public debate in both states (separately and in their mutual relations). The task of the respondents was to indicate whether a given process had a positive, neutral or negative impact on the further fate of the country and its inhabitants.

In Poland, the following phenomena, facts and events were enumerated:

- The fact that the Vilnius region, Polesia, Volhynia and Eastern Galicia belonged to Poland in the interwar period;
- Activities of the Sanation movement in Poland in the interwar period;
- Activities of the national-democratic movement in Poland in the interwar period;
- The rejection by Poland of the peace offer from the Third Reich before the outbreak of war in 1939;
- Polish conspiracy in 1939-1945;
- Activities of the OUN and the UPA in eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic in 1941-1944;

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<sup>5</sup> These events are related to the Ukrainian struggle for independence. The Ukrainian People's Republic led such a struggle in part of Ukraine from the center in Kiev, previously under the authority of the Russian Empire. Simultaneously the Western Ukrainian People's Republic fought for independence in the part with the center in Lviv which had previously belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Fourth Universal was a document of the Central Council of Ukraine signed in Kiev which declared the independence of the UPR on January 22, 1918. The Act of Reunification (Act Zluky) was a document in which both these republics merged into one state called the UPR, signed a year later.

- The Warsaw Uprising of 1944;
- Change in the national composition of the Polish state as a result of World War II;
- Economic and social reforms in the period of the Polish People's Republic;
- Anti-communist guerrilla after the end of World War II;
- Operation "Vistula" of 1947;
- Activities of the Catholic Church in 1945-1989;
- Activities of "Solidarity" in 1980s.

When asked separately about the fight of "cursed soldiers", the respondents were to say whether they believed their activity was mainly a fight for Polish independence; fight for independence during which crimes against civilians were also committed; or mainly crimes against civilians. In this way, "cursed soldiers" appeared in the questionnaire in two places, but with differently formulated questions: once explicitly as "cursed soldiers", and once in the above-quoted question as the "anti-communist guerrilla after the end of World War II". This issue was treated in more depth in the survey because of the recent changes to government's memory policy.

A separate question pertained also to the 1989 Round Table. In the first place, the interviewees were to decide on what the event was. It was necessary to choose two responses from among the six given, but there was also room for answering "Other" and indication of own interpretation.

- An agreement enabling the solution of the political crisis and further development of the country
- The beginning of the process of Poland approaching Western democracies
- A compromise with former communists which ensured that they maintained their position
- Betrayal of the ideals of "Solidarity"
- An operation of the communist secret services
- The first step on the way to the admission of foreign capital to Poland

We inquired about this issue separately in our interviews, because in our opinion, responses to this question show in a concise manner the attitude of respondents to the People's Republic of Poland and the Third Republic of Poland.

In Ukraine, the following facts, processes and phenomena were researched (the evaluation was performed identically as in the question about Polish history; the respondent had to say whether a given process or event was positive, neutral or negative from the point of view of consequent fate of Ukraine and its residents):



- Collectivization in the USSR in the 1920s;
- Industrialization of the USSR in the 1930s;
- Polish rule in the territories of western Ukraine in 1921-39;
- Activities of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists during World War II;
- Incorporation of Western Ukraine into the USSR in September 1939;
- Participation of Ukrainians in the Red Army and the Soviet underground army during World War II;
- Conflicts of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) with Poles in the West-Ukrainian Territories in 1943-44;
- Change of the national composition of the USSR as a result of World War II;
- UPA activity in western Ukraine in 1944-1950;
- Activities of the Ukrainian diaspora in the world in 1945-91;
- Activity of the Orthodox church in the USSR in 1944-91;
- Social policy of the Ukrainian SSR and the USSR in 1950-70;
- The activity of dissidents in the USSR in 1970-80.

Separately, questions were asked about the activities of the UPA during World War II, again because of the importance of the topic for the contemporary state narrative about the events of the 1930s and 1940s, and the assessment of the collapse of the USSR. Regarding the latter process, the respondents were to choose up to two responses from the following:

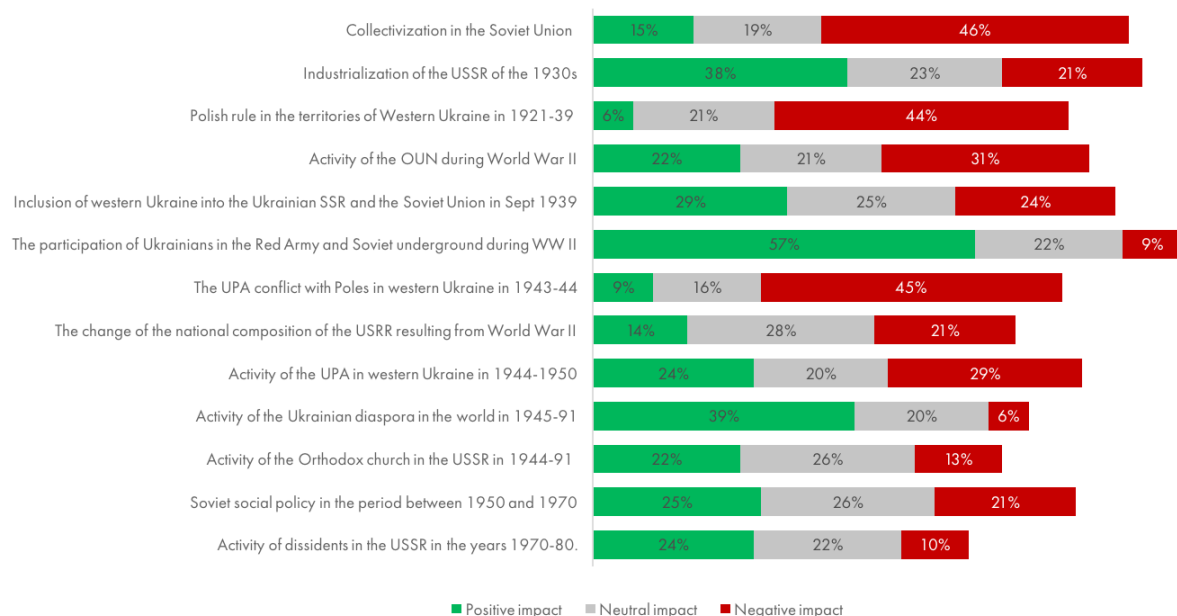
- Destruction of a well-functioning state;
- Liberation of Ukraine from the Russian occupation;
- The beginning of a long economic crisis concerning all countries of the former USSR;
- The process enabling the construction and development of new independent states, including Ukraine;
- Fulfilling the dreams of several generations of Ukrainians about independent Ukraine;
- The collapse of the state, which was a counterbalance to US rule in the world;

One could also choose the option “Another answer” and propose their own interpretation. In this question, as in the question regarding the Round Table in Poland, an attempt was made to get a picture of respondents’ attitude to the USSR and independent Ukraine.

### Ukrainians on the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Let us first look at the assessments of events and phenomena from the history of Ukraine. Their distribution is presented in the graph below, with the events arranged chronologically (from the oldest to the most recent). Percentages do not sum up to 100%, since the answers “I have not heard about it” and “It is hard to say” were omitted. Therefore, the length of the bar at each event or phenomenon reflects the level of their recognition in the society.

Chart 12. Perception of facts, phenomena and events from the history of Ukraine in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



There is a relative agreement among Ukrainians regarding the positive assessment of only one historical event, namely the participation of Ukrainians in the Red Army and Soviet underground army activities during World War II. According to 57% of respondents, this had a positive impact on the future of Ukraine and its inhabitants, and only every eleventh interviewee evaluated this impact as negative.

Among the events and processes listed on the chart, only a few may be indicated that have obtained more positive than negative ratings. They include the industrialization of the 1930s, the activity of the Ukrainian diaspora in the world in 1945-91, the activity of the Orthodox church in the USSR in 1944-91 and the activity of dissidents in the USSR in the years 1970-80. An almost equal percentage of positive and negative assessments (with a slight advantage of the former) was attributed to the inclusion of western Ukraine into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Soviet Union in September 1939, and the Soviet social policy in the period between 1950 and 1970. It seems that neither historians nor the public opinion will be able to reach a consensus about both above issues soon. The former event concerns a paradox: on the one hand, in the 1922-1991 period the USSR was an obstacle on Ukraine's road to independence, but on the other in 1939-1954 it led to the unification of the lands postulated as "own" by the anti-communist independence movement. In turn, the assessment of the second issue is affected by contradictory feelings. While the prosperity of the late 60s and 70s is appreciated, the society is aware that this state was achieved at the price of undemocratic rule and in the period of linguistic russification.

Slightly more often, the respondents agreed as to the negative assessment of certain phenomena. Three of them obtained slightly less than half of the negative ratings: the col-

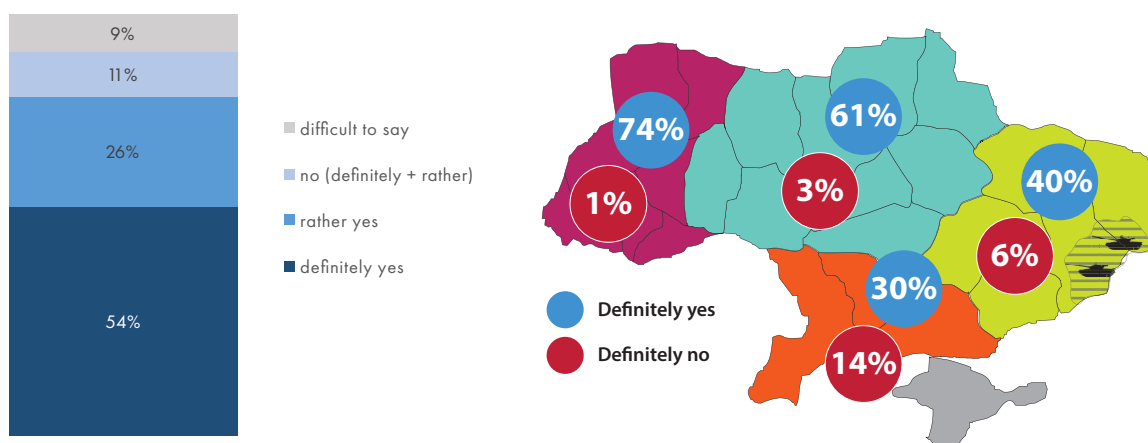
lectivization in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, Polish rule in the territories of Western Ukraine in 1921-39 and the UPA conflict with Poles in 1943-44. It is not difficult to explain the sources of such choices of respondents. Regarding the first question, most of them probably realized that collectivization led to chaos and losses in the countryside, and finally to the tragedy of Holodomor (its unequivocally negative assessment shall be discussed further). In turn, the predominance of negative assessments of the second phenomenon reflects how the rule of the Second Republic of Poland has since the interwar period been presented in the textbook narrative of the Ukrainian SSR, and then the Republic of Ukraine. It seems that the source of the image of this government as completely unauthorized (and sometimes directly perceived as occupation) is not understood by the majority of Polish public opinion. This is currently one of two historically contentious issues between Poles and Ukrainians, the other one is the difference in assessments of the anti-Polish OUN-UPA action in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia in 1943-1944. We aimed to formulate the third question in the least suggestive way, not related to the discourse of only one side of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict over the memory of events from 1943-1944. Words such as the "Volhynia crime" are predominant in Poland, while the "tragedy of Volhynia" is the term prevailing in Ukraine. Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that the vast majority of Ukrainian citizens who have heard about these events at all know about their negative consequences for both for the local population and contemporary relations between the two societies. Research conducted in Ukraine in the previous year states that 7% of Ukrainians evaluate these events as genocide (Stryjek, Konieczna-Sałamatin, & Zacharuk, 2017, p. 48).

A completely new, de-Sovietized look at the history of Ukraine is a process carried out by the authorities in an inconsistent manner, divided by periods of stagnation or even returns to interpretation from before 1991. Thus, it has not yet been established in the society although since the 2014 it has become unambiguous in the anti-imperial and anti-Soviet direction. Nevertheless, as the presented research results also demonstrate, this is not necessarily widely accepted in the south and east of Ukraine.

One of the events whose assessment in Ukrainian society can be considered to be largely agreed upon is the Great Famine of 1932-33. According to 80% of Ukrainians, it was a genocide committed by the Soviet authorities, and only every ninth disagrees with such an interpretation of this event.

The graph below presents the distribution of responses across the country and the regional variation of the percentage of extreme opinions ("definitely yes" and "definitely not"). Despite the fact that in all regions the vast majority of respondents "definitely" or "rather" agree that the Holodomor was genocide, the strength of belief in such an interpretation varies between regions and is the smallest in the aforementioned southern region.

Chart 13. Was the Great Famine of 1932-33 genocide?

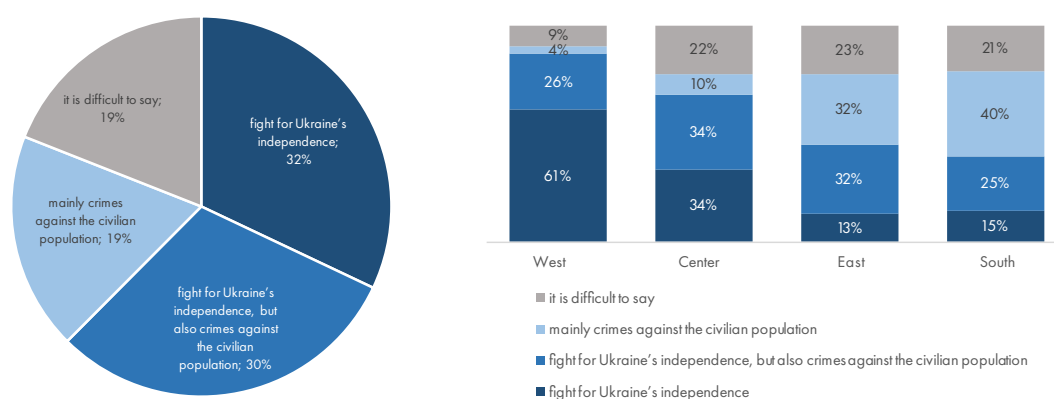


The diversity of Ukrainian ideas about the past is best shown by the assessment of two phenomena or processes: the first are the fights of the UPA and the second is the collapse of the USSR in 1991.

Looking at the assessment of the activities of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) from the national perspective, we may immediately notice a deep controversy. Firstly and foremostly, almost half of the respondents notice in this fight an element of crime against the civilian population, and every fifth respondent believes that crimes prevailed. Simultaneously, over 60% recognize UPA as a force fighting for the independence of Ukraine, including every third respondent who does not see any crimes in their activities.

The assessment of UPA's activity, like most past events, is strongly regionally differentiated, as presented in the chart.

Chart 14. Assessment of the fights of the UPA



When analyzing the regional differentiation of ratings, it is worth noting that there is little regional difference regarding the percentage of respondents choosing the statement that the UPA fought for the independence of Ukraine but also committed crimes against the civilian population. The main differentiation concerns two more explicit assessments, whether the ac-

tivity of the UPA consisted only of fight for independence or of crimes. The west of the country tends to more often choose the former, and the east and south – the latter assessment.

The collapse of the USSR was an event from which the modern history of independent Ukraine began in the formal sense. Previously conducted research (Fomina et al., 2013) showed that this event is judged ambiguously partially because in the consciousness of the average Ukrainian it initiated a deep economic crisis which affected practically every family<sup>6</sup>. In the survey discussed here, we asked the respondents to indicate what exactly the collapse of the USSR was for them. Among the offered answers there were statements with neutral overtones, as well as indications of positive or negative attitude of the respondents to this event.

The question was not difficult for the respondents. Almost everyone expressed their opinion, and the answer “It is difficult to say” accounted for only 6%. However, half of the respondents indicated only one answer, although they could choose two.

*Chart 15. What was the collapse of the USSR?*



Note: the answers do not add up to 100%, because it was possible to indicate up to two answers

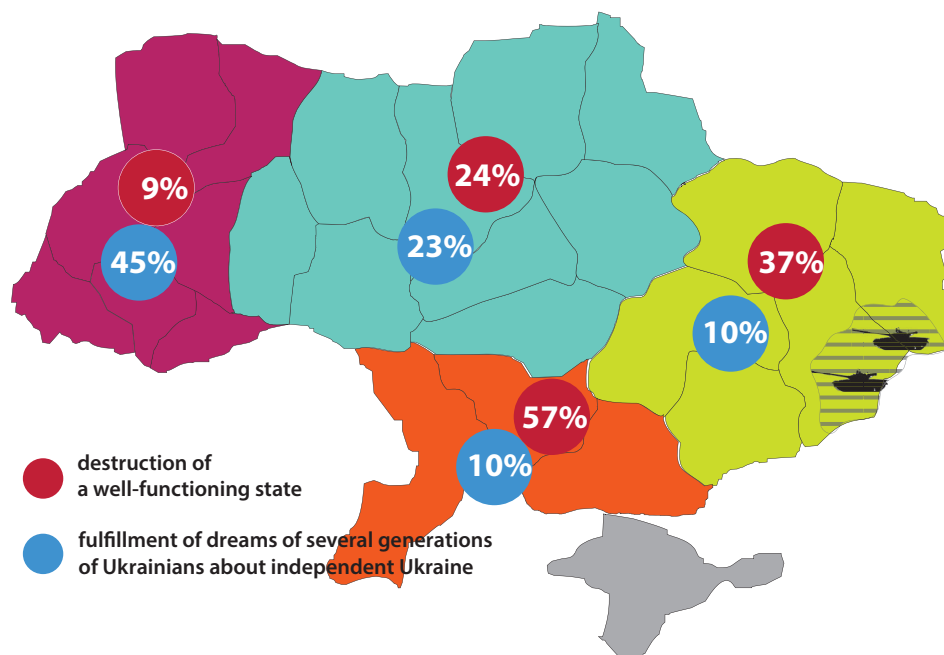
The most frequently chosen characteristic of the collapse of the USSR was the statement of a rather neutral character: it was namely a process that allowed the building of new, independent states, including Ukraine. Nevertheless, already in the second place in terms of the frequency of indications there appears “the destruction of a well-functioning state”, an opinion indicating the unfavorable assessment of what happened. Another “nostalgic” opinion referring to the Soviet period discourse was the “collapse of the state that counterbalanced the US reign in the world”, while the second opinion positively evaluating the collapse of the USSR was describing it as “liberation of Ukraine from the Russian occupation”. How-

<sup>6</sup> Data on the economic situation of Ukraine in the first years of transformation can be found, among others in the reports of the CASE Scientific Foundation (Coupe & Vakhitova, 2013, pp. 17-20).

ever, the fact that only every sixth respondent chose this last assessment suggests that the USSR is not perceived by contemporary Ukrainian society as a Russian, or even foreign, state.

Both nostalgia to the USSR times and the positive assessment of its dissolution are regionally differentiated. The map below presents the frequency of selection of two opinions, one nostalgic and the other suggesting a positive attitude towards the collapse of the USSR. It is worth noting that the nostalgic answer was distributed in a more varied way than the positive opinion.

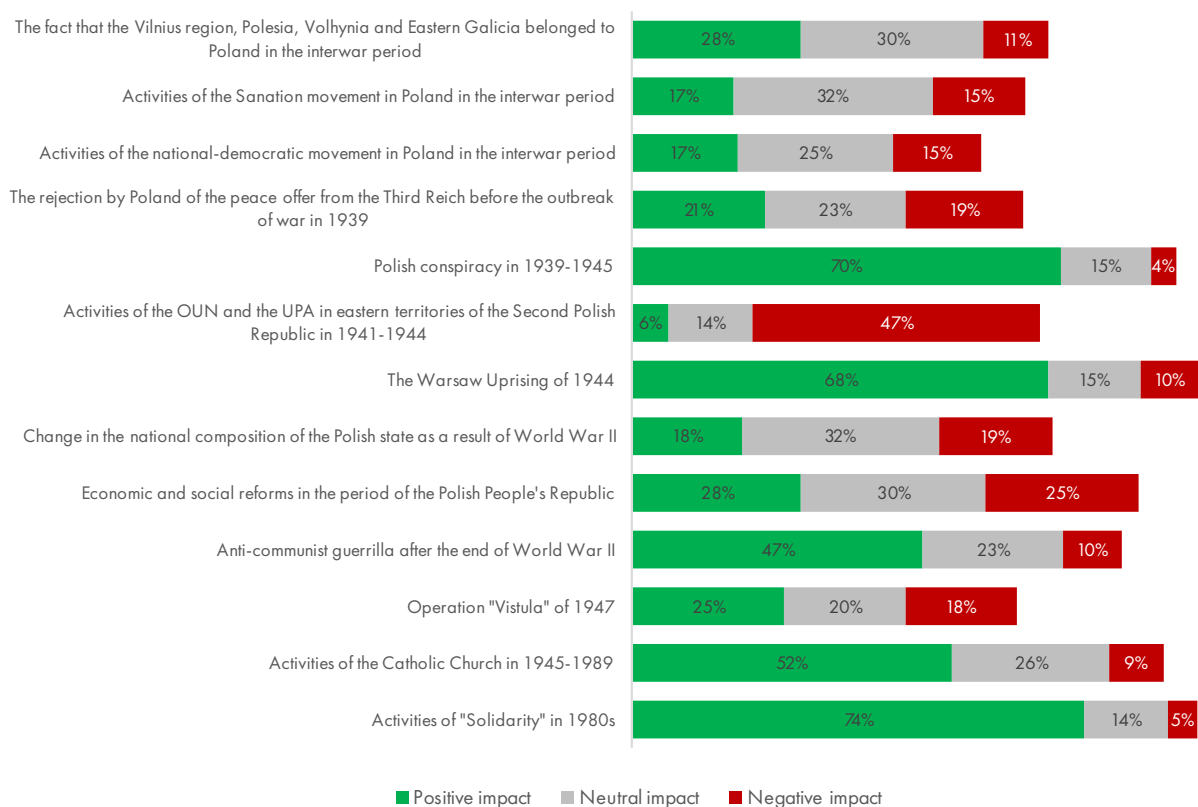
Map 3. Opinions about the collapse of the USSR – regional diversity



### Poles on the history of the 20th century

Poles were asked to evaluate various phenomena, events, and processes from the 20th century history as well. The following chart presents the assessment of these phenomena and processes from the perspective of their impact on the future of Poland and its inhabitants. As in the case of the presentation of research results in Ukraine, the answers “I have not heard about it” and “It is difficult to say” are omitted, and thus the percentages do not add up to 100%. Also here the length of the bar suggests to what extent the given event is known to the public.

Chart 16. Perception of facts, phenomena and events from the history of Poland in the 20th century.



When reviewing the distribution of assessments of these events and phenomena, it is worth to pay attention to those for which social consent exists. The conspiracy activities during World War II, the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, the post-war activity of the Catholic Church, and the activity of Solidarity are unequivocally appreciated. All these events and phenomena are associated with the struggle (in the case of the Church, the most “organic” in form), which in the long term ended with the victory of the Polish nation. This confirms the thesis that the Polish canon of recent history is unambiguously heroic and martyrological. In Poland, the general agreement regarding the negative assessment only occurs in relation to the activities of the OUN and UPA in the eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic, in the period between 1941 and 1945<sup>7</sup>. At the same time, the activities of this organization and events from the pre-war period belong to the historical area that is less known to Poles. Among the post-war events, Operation Vistula of 1947 is the least known.

From this perspective, we again notice that in contrast to Ukrainians, Poles possess a much more “agreed upon” and “accepted” common narrative about the newest history of their country. It can be noticed that the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 belongs to that narrative, as according to more than two-thirds of Poles it positively influenced the fate of the country.

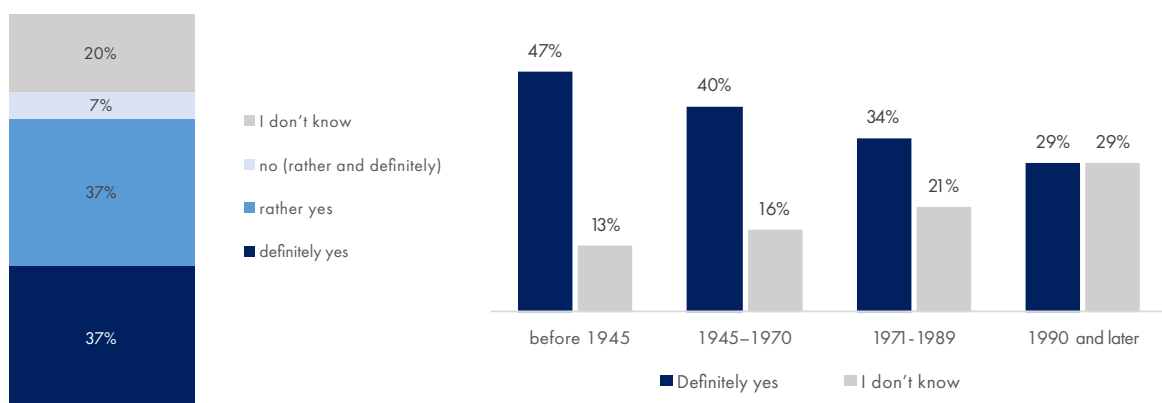
<sup>7</sup> Here, also in the light of the events of 1943-1944, a neutral wording was used, so as not to suggest an assessment to the respondents.

This means that the dispute conducted in certain circles concerning the sense of this uprising is rather slowly penetrating the general consciousness of Poles. The phenomena that are ambiguously assessed (with almost the same percentage of positive and negative ratings) are almost all of those that took place before World War II, as well as the rejection of the peace offer from the Third Reich before the outbreak of World War II, the change of the national composition of the Polish state after the war, the already mentioned Operation "Vistula", and socio-economic reforms from the times of the Polish People's Republic.

In addition to the above list of phenomena, events and processes that the respondents had to assess, the survey featured also other questions concerning incidents important from the point of view of the politics of memory and today's divisions on the Polish political scene. These were questions about the Volhynia crime and the Round Table of 1989 in the eyes of the respondents.

We asked the question about the qualification of the Volhynia massacre as a genocide mainly due to the fact that such was the classification unambiguously attributed to it in July 2016 by a resolution of the Sejm and the Senate. It turned out that very few disagreed with the position contained in this resolution (7%); three-quarters the respondents agreed, but at the same time every fifth person could not take a position and provide the answer "It is difficult to say". Poles' responses were clearly different in each age category. The younger the respondents were, the less willingly they gave the categorical "definitely yes" answer and more often evaded the position.

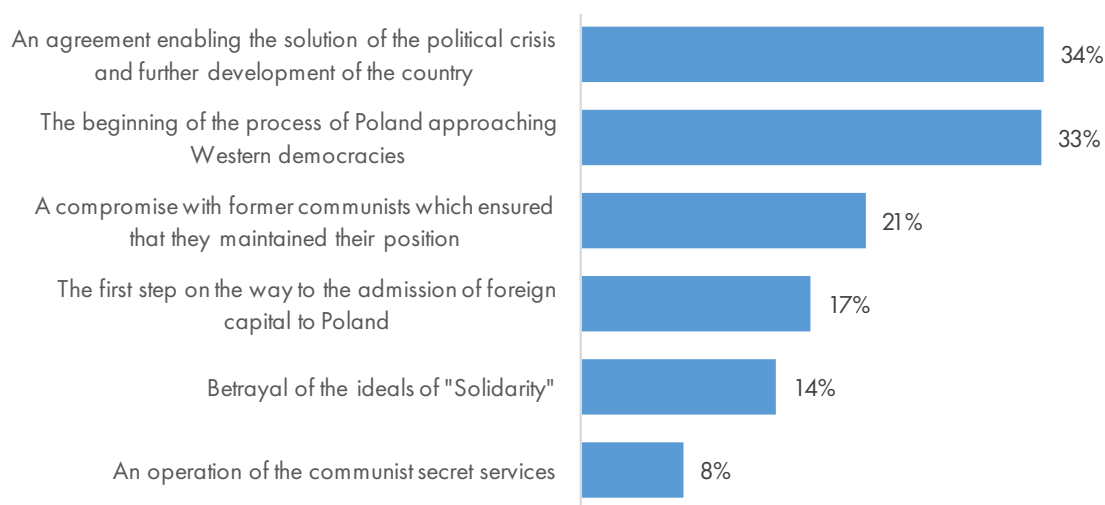
*Chart 17. Was the Volhynia crime of 1943-44 a genocide?*



The universally recognized beginning of the Polish transformation was the Round Table Agreements of 1989. This event is today assessed differently by various political forces in Poland. The subjects were able to choose two of the six answers offered. Positive interpretations of this event were most often indicated, describing the Round Table as an "agreement enabling the solution of the political crisis and further development of the country" or as "the beginning of the process of Poland approaching Western democracies".



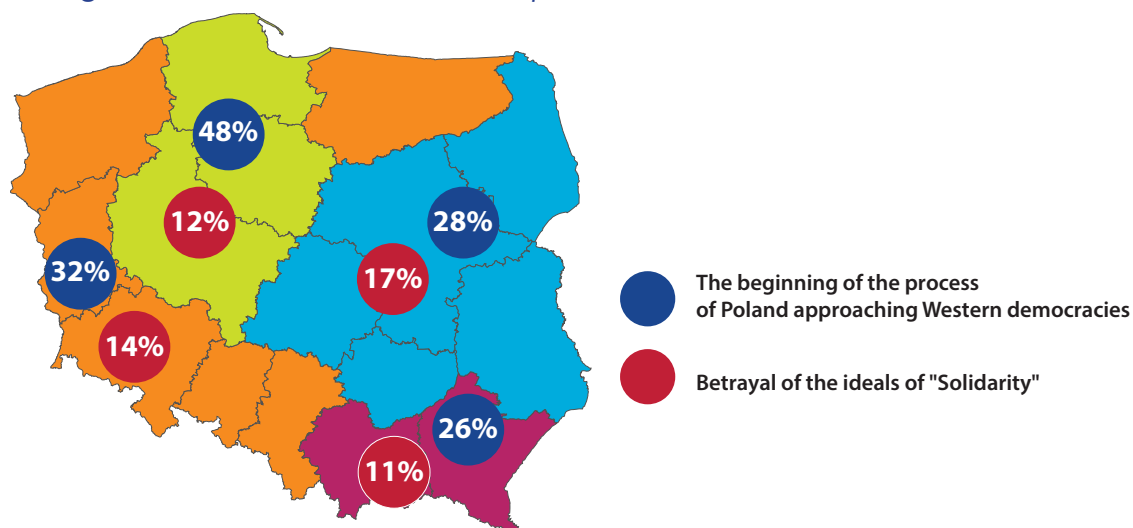
Chart 18. What was the Round Table of 1989?



In the above summary of the characteristics of the Round Table, two of them which reflect different attitudes towards this event are worth a closer look: “the beginning of the process of Poland approaching Western democracies” suggests a positive attitude towards the agreements concluded at the time. In turn, “denial of the ideals of Solidarity” is rather a negative assessment of what happened at that time.

It turns out that the frequency of selection of both quoted descriptions depends on the region (see map), and the percentages sharing the latter opinion also depend on the age category: among the oldest, almost every fifth respondent (19%) believed the Round Table to have betrayed the ideals of “Solidarity”, and among the youngest this opinion was expressed by only 11%. The ratings of the Round Table were not significantly diversified as regards the level of education.

Map 4. Regional diversification of selected opinions on the Round Table of 1989.



Answers that were the closest to historical narratives presented at school and concerning figures, events and phenomena from the 20th century were recorded in the former Prussian Partition. What is meant here is among others rather negative assessment of the activities of the National Democrats in the Second Polish Republic, appreciation of the merits of Irena Sendler and Lech Wałęsa and a positive assessment of the consequences of the Round Table. Moreover, also the level of knowledge of the history of Polish people and events turned out to be the highest in this region (while in Galicia it was the lowest). These results correspond with the predominance of the civic dimension of national identity in this region, also found in our research. Considering all of the above, the former Prussian partition appears as part of Poland “deepest immersed” in national history, but at the same time most willing to use universal criteria for its evaluation (namely, distance to ethnic nationalism, respect for the Righteous Among the Nations, appreciation for the modernization of contemporary Poland).

## How to talk about the past today – social reception of the memory policy

Over the last few years, issues related to the past have begun to appear more often in both public discourse and the activities of political institutions. An example of this are the Polish and Ukrainian decommunization laws mentioned in the previous chapter. Furthermore, both parliaments have also adopted resolutions which contained their interpretation of various events from the past. These resolutions were later criticized by various circles, while others expressed support for them. The survey discussed here included a number of questions that were aimed at determining the attitude of citizens of both countries to such practices of political institutions.

Presentation of the results of this part of the survey should begin with the basic question concerning reaction to the very fact that the state interprets events from the past directly, via the acts of the president or parliamentary resolutions and laws. Particularly documents published by the legislative power were rather numerous in recent years, in both countries. In Ukraine, apart from the de-communization act, two other resolutions adopted by the Verkhovna Rada on 9 April 2015 were the most significant. One was “On the perpetuation of the victory over Nazism in World War II 1939-1945” which removed from the official discourse the term “Great Patriotic War” referring to the USSR’s struggle against the Third Reich in 1941-1945 and still used in Russia. The other, “On the legal status and honoring memory of the struggle for independence of Ukraine in the 20th century,” aroused particular interest in Poland as it lists the OUN and the UPA among distinguished organizations whose assessments are protected by law.

From among previous state acts on history, it is worth recalling the 2006 act qualifying Holodomor as genocide against the Ukrainian nation, as well as the judgment of the Kyiv court in the same case from January 2010. As a result, the assessment of the 1932-1933

famine in the USSR is also regulated by state law in contemporary Ukraine. In turn, in Poland in July 2016 the Sejm and the Senate adopted a resolution qualifying the Volhynia Massacre as genocide. Further, in January 2018 the parliament amended the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance which penalized statements that burdened Polish society with the responsibility for crimes against Jews during World War II and statements denying the crimes of “Ukrainian nationalists” committed on citizens of the Second Polish Republic in the period 1925-1950. Although the Sejm and the Senate withdrew from the first of these provisions in the subsequent amendment of June 2018, the mentioned imprecise and restrictive provision regarding the OUN and the UPA was preserved. It is worth adding that the latter provision, as the only one of all the abovementioned regulations in Ukraine and Poland, not only establishes legal protection for some interpretations of the past and limits the freedom of discussion about them, but also penalizes alternative views by up to three years of imprisonment.

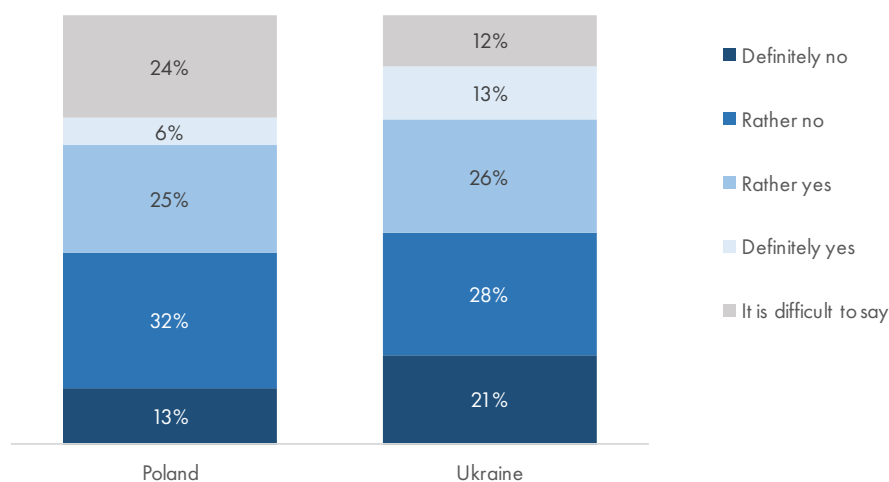
Questions about this matter differed slightly between both countries. Due to the fact that Ukrainian legal acts were adopted earlier and thus had to be less known to respondents than the Polish ones,<sup>8</sup> in this country the question was of a more general nature. It read: “Does the state have the right to make decisions regarding the evaluation of past events?” In Poland, on the other hand, the question was more precise: “Should the Sejm and the Senate decide in their legal acts on current interpretations of historical events from World War II and communist times?”

In both countries, the state was almost equally denied the right to interpret the past in such a manner. In Poland, 45% of respondents said that the Sejm and the Senate should not do this; in Ukraine 49% expressed the view that the state has no right to directly assess the past. The data is presented in a graph (Chart 19). It is worth noticing that the opinions of Ukrainians are more categorical: more often they responded “definitely yes” or “definitely not”, and much less often than Poles evaded the answer by choosing “It is difficult to say”. It is clear that in both countries this issue divides the public opinion. Perhaps due to the fact that the Ukrainian state and society are undergoing deeper transformations since the government changed there in 2014, in comparison with Poland where the new government was elected in 2015, in Ukraine a group of people who have no opinion on this issue is smaller.

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<sup>8</sup> The study was conducted when the first amendment to the law on the Institute of National Remembrance in Poland was being introduced.

Chart 19. The attitude of Poles and Ukrainians to interpretations of the past done by the authorities of state power



Denying state authorities the right to interpret the past may be related to citizens' trust in that state or lack of support for the state's policy of remembrance. This hypothesis seems to be confirmed by the strong correlation between the perception of the need for de-communization and the recognition of the right to interpret the past by the authorities. Quite rightly – after all, de-communization laws are a form of assessment by a state authority of a certain part of the country's history. In Ukraine, the correlation was even stronger than in Poland<sup>9</sup>.

In Ukraine, over half of the respondents believe that such a process is unnecessary. In Poland, opinions were divided almost symmetrically: 38% deem de-communization unnecessary, while 40% think it is necessary. It is worth noting that in Poland almost one in four respondents (22%) does not have an opinion on this matter, while in Ukraine, the undecided represent only 8%. In both countries people strongly convinced of the need for de-communization (i.e. those who responded that it is "definitely needed") most often considered that the parliament should have an initiative in this matter. People with less decisive views, or "rather" perceiving the need for de-communization, were more likely to give initiative to citizens – residents, local authorities or expert circles. Perhaps the determined advocates of de-communization did not trust their fellow citizens and therefore would like this matter to be carried out by the authorities without engaging in discussions with the society.

In Poland, opposition to the interpretation of the past by the state is not significantly diversified regionally or generatively, while it grows with education. Among university graduates, over half (53%) believe that the Sejm and the Senate cannot determine the binding interpretations of the past. The least often opposed were those with basic vocational education (37%), however, in no educational group do the advocates of this form of pursuing memory policy outweigh the opponents.

<sup>9</sup> Due to the character of measurements of support for de-communization and for the interpretation of the past by the authorities, the Spearman rank correlation coefficient was applied. Its value amounted to 0.43 in Ukraine and 0.39 in Poland.

The situation is different in Ukraine. The only region in which residents more often recognize than reject the right of the state to interpret the past is the west. At the same time, the difference in the frequency of expressing both views is very significant there – supporters of state interpretation of the past are twice as numerous as its opponents (63% and 33%, respectively). In the eastern region the distribution is opposite. Opponents of the past being interpreted by the state (55%) are twice as numerous there as supporters (28%). Against this background, the southern region seems to be very exceptional as 82% of its inhabitants refuse the state the right to interpret the past. If the distribution of the answer to this question can be treated as a test of trust in the state's memory policy, it seems that in this respect the Ukrainian authorities can only count only on the north-western part of the country.

### Polish-Ukrainian settlements of injustices

In response to the directly asked question about the treatment of “uncomfortable historical facts”, the two nations in large majority agreed that such facts should be openly discussed. The survey also asked about more specific issues, i.e. about the faults of Poles and Ukrainians towards each other. In such sensitive matters, it is very important how the questions were formulated, which is why we quote them here literally. The order of the questions presented below reflects the poll for the Poles; the Ukrainians were asked first about the faults of Poles, and then about the blame of the Ukrainians.

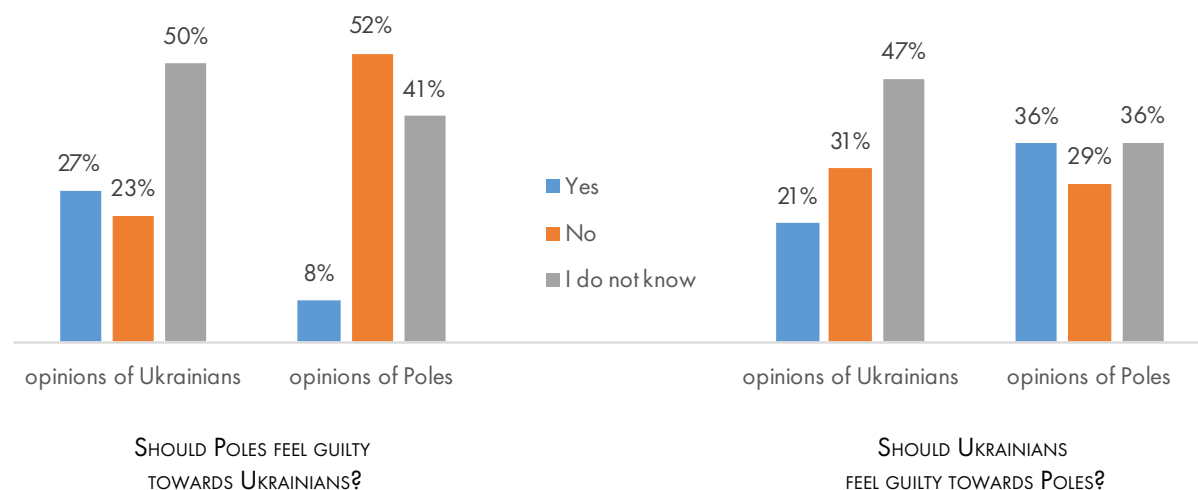
- A. Were there any such events in the history of relations between Poland and Ukraine in the 20th century, in connection with which Ukrainians should feel guilty towards Poles today?
- B. Were there any such events in the history of relations between Poland and Ukraine in the 20th century, in connection with which Poles should feel guilty towards Ukrainians today?

Both questions could only be answered “yes”, “no” or “I do not know”. If someone answered in the affirmative, they were asked to indicate what the events were.

The distribution of answers to both questions is presented in the chart below. First of all, one notices the fact that half of the Ukrainians were unable (or refused) to speak about the discussed matter. The percentage of Poles who answered “It is hard to say” was also very high. Additionally, Poles demonstrate much better disposition than Ukrainians. More than half of them think that they can find no faults with themselves regarding relations with Ukrainians, and only 8% note that certain events occurred due to which they could feel guilty. This result seems to suggest that in recent years, the Polish public opinion (and the political elite) greatly supports the view that the crimes of the OUN-UPA against Poles that occurred in 1943 and 1944 were very unique in comparison with the evil done to Ukrainians by Poles in the First and Second Polish Republic. In fact, they were so unique against the background of

the whole history of mutual relations, that the abovementioned evil can be dismissed. This is connected with great popularity of the image of Eastern Borderlands as an area in which the harmony of intercultural relations flourished under Polish rule, while such aspects that can be interpreted as forms of colonial rule are being repressed.

*Chart 20. Opinions of Poles and Ukrainians about mutual faults and wrongs*



In Poland, inhabitants of the former Prussian partition most often recognise how Poles wronged Ukrainians (12%), while in Galicia and the Congress Poland, where the events in question took place, only 10% and 5% respectively see their responsibility. Apparently, living in the areas where historical events took place is not related to the knowledge of these events or the desire to draw conclusions from them. It has also turned out that the level of education did not affect the percentage of Poles who did not notice the fault of their national group in relation to Ukrainians. Among respondents with university degrees, just as in other groups, more than half believed that in the twentieth century Poles have never acted towards Ukrainians in a way that they should apologize for.

The conviction concerning the guilt of Ukrainians is mainly related to age – the older the respondents are, the more often they indicate that there were situations in which Ukrainians should feel guilty. 44% of those born before 1945 and 25% of those born after 1990 believe so. The percentage of people answering “no” does not depend on their age – in all age categories, it amounts to approximately 28-30%, but the frequency of evading the answer (“I do not know”) is very different. In the youngest age group, this answer was provided by 46%, and in the oldest group by only 28%.

In Ukraine, the situation is in a certain sense symmetrical. Inhabitants of the western region most seldom notice the faults of their own national group towards Poles (17%), while they are most often recognized by the inhabitants of the south of the country (29%). In this case, it seems that in the west of Ukraine there is a mechanism of repression of responsibility for the behavior of ancestors – as it was here that atrocity crimes against Poles took place

during World War II. Perhaps, western Ukrainians' defense of their own image as victims of the Polish rule and not the perpetrators of crimes is also strong because accusations of crimes against Poles are much more often formulated not by local Ukrainians, but by inhabitants of the South regarded as the most strongly sovietized. Such are the indirect implications of the presented data. In the society as a whole, the faults of Ukrainians towards Poles are more often noted by older people, born before 1945. 28% of them think that Ukrainians are guilty, while in the youngest age group this view was expressed by only 14%. The youngest, however, most often did not have the opinion on the subject.

As for the Poles' fault with the Ukrainians, they were most often noted by the inhabitants of the western region (41%), and the least often – by those from the east (19%). The pattern of age dependence was as described above; people born before 1945 saw Poles' faults more clearly than younger people (33% of the oldest and 21% of the youngest respondents, respectively).

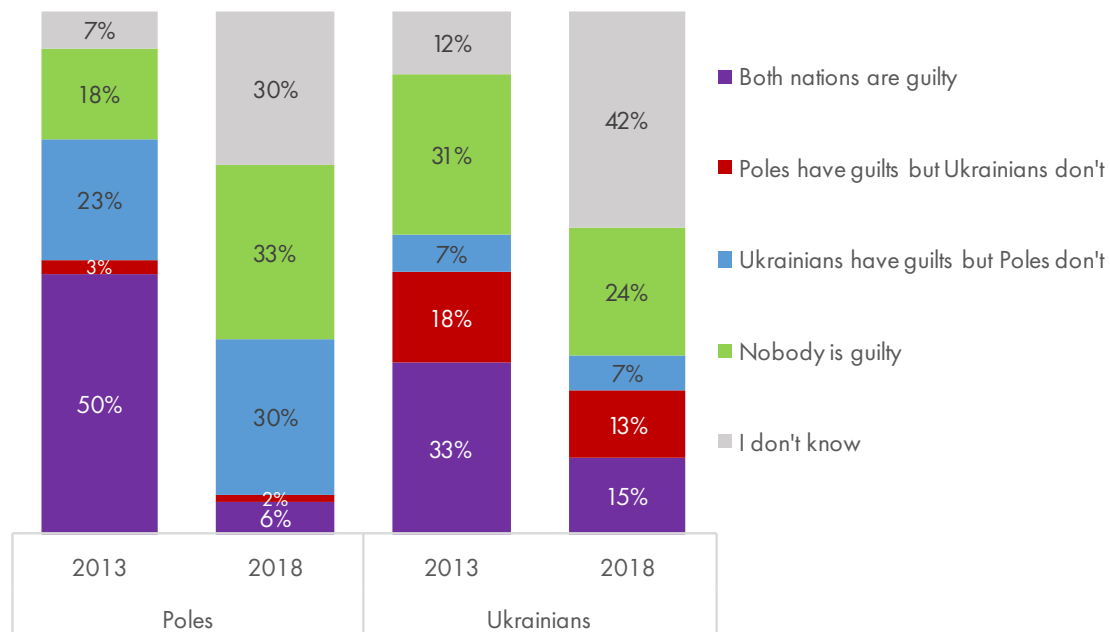
In Poland, at the national level there was no relationship between opinions about the fault of one's own nation and public treatment of the past. In Galicia, where Polish-Ukrainian conflicts occurred in the past, such a relationship was noted as very similar to the one characteristic for the western region of Ukraine. This would indicate the existence of a similar dependence on the Ukrainian side of the border: the more local ancestors were involved in the fight, the more locals reject the modern accusation against them that they acted unwisely and the more they want to hide it from the world. However, results from Poland should be treated with greater caution, as in Poland the research was conducted on a smaller sample than in Ukraine, and included only 200 inhabitants of Galicia.

In conclusion, it is worth looking at the changes that have occurred in the minds of Poles and Ukrainians in the perception of mutual faults over the past five years. In May 2013 (thus before the events that were later named "Euromaidan"), the Institute of Public Affairs conducted a survey in Poland and in Ukraine concerning the mutual perception of Poles and Ukrainians. The survey was conducted on representative samples using the telephone survey method, quite different than the survey being the main subject of the analysis in this report (Fomina et al., 2013). Moreover, in 2018 no research was carried out in the occupied and armed areas. Despite the above, we think that it is worth comparing these results, since the differences are so large that they cannot result solely from different methodologies.

The question about the mutual faults of Poles and Ukrainians was formulated almost identically. The graph presents the results of combining the answers to the questions of whether Ukrainians should feel guilty towards Poles and whether Poles should feel guilty towards Ukrainians. The "Both nations are at fault" category includes people who answered "yes" to both questions. The category "Poles are to blame, and Ukrainians are not" includes people who answered "yes" to the question on Poles' faults and at the same time responded "no" or "I do not know" to the question on Ukrainians' fault. Similarly, the category "Ukrai-

nians are to blame, and Poles are not” includes people who answered “yes” to the question of Ukrainians’ faults towards Poles, while the question about Poles’ faults was answered “no” or “I do not know”. “Nobody is to blame” includes people who answered “no” to one of the questions and “no” or “I do not know” to the other. Therefore, the category “I do not know” includes only those who consistently answered “I do not know” in both questions.

*Chart 21. Polish-Ukrainian settlements of injustices. Comparison of 2013 and 2018.*



The graph above highlights the decrease of the readiness to recognize the responsibility of one’s national group for events that harm the other group. Therefore, the share of people recognizing the faults of both nations has decreased significantly in both countries. In Poland, this decline is simply dramatic – eightfold, from 50% to 6%, while in Ukraine this group has halved. There is also a significant increase in the percentage of “I do not know” answers, which in this context should rather be treated as an escapist response (avoiding a position, not an actual lack of opinion).

It is also worth noting that within 5 years that elapsed between both polls in Poland, the share of people convinced of the innocence of their own group in combination with the faults of the second group increased significantly. The change occurred between the 70th and 75th anniversary of the crime in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia and is related to the prevailing message of the Polish public debate and politics: that Ukraine as a state evaded acceptance of responsibility and did not accept the Polish qualification of OUN-UPA massacres as genocide. In contrast, in Ukraine the percentage of those thinking that Poles are guilty in a conflict with the Ukrainians decreased slightly during the discussed period.



## Summaries and conclusions

- The surveys were conducted in Poland and Ukraine at the beginning of 2018 on representative samples for adult residents of both countries. The subject of the research concerned collective memory and images of the past of both countries, but the issue of mutual relations and common history was not the central issue of surveys and was included in the final part of the questionnaire so that views on these matters did not affect responses to other aspects of history and memory.
- Interest in the past is usually explained by the respondents with reference to existential issues. Knowledge about the past helps them to understand who they are and where they come from. In this way, the relationship between the individual's identity and the images of the past to which it refers is revealed. In addition, Poles more often than Ukrainians refer to practical motivations: a desire to better understand the socio-political situation in the country and the opportunity to oppose political manipulation. From the point of view of Ukrainians, interest in the past more often than in the case of Poles belongs to the "portfolio" of an educated person, and this is the case in all generations. It is true that when the state or local government shows excessive interest in the past, respondents advise them to rather deal with the conditions in which people live today. In Ukraine, significant regional differences regarding this issue were identified. The western part of the country presents less dissatisfaction with the authorities' interest in the past than other regions.
- The close relationship with the past is most strongly felt in the family context, while its "formalized" versions (museums, school, historical books or places of important historical events) evoke much less emotion in both countries.
- The number of sources from which respondents learn about the past indicated by Ukrainians was higher than by Poles, with one source, the school, mentioned by two-thirds of respondents (68%). In Poland, no one answer dominated other choices, and culture in forms of documentaries, feature films and museums served as the most often enumerated source of knowledge. Ukrainians generally declared less trust in the sources they used than Poles, and perhaps that is why they indicated more of them: Poles indicated an average of 3.2 sources, and Ukrainians – 4.1.
- Poles less often than Ukrainians feel that important historical events directly affected them or their families personally. Such an answer was offered by 57% of Ukrainians and 29% of Poles. It seems that for Poles the distance between modern times and "great history" is larger, because the most recent event mentioned in this context by

Poles was martial law, and by Ukrainians the Euromaidan, or events from 2013 and 2014 and the war afterwards. It might be inferred that in common perception the “historical events” take place when they are connected with the fact that a group of people loses their lives in defense of freedom, sovereignty or survival of the national community.

- Poland has a fairly homogeneous pattern of celebrating national holidays and memorial days, while in Ukraine there are certain parallel commemoration arrangements. One of them concerns the holidays introduced to the official calendar in Soviet times, while the second, largely an alternative, was established in independent Ukraine. Some of the “new” holidays are intended to replace the “old” ones, e.g. the Day of Remembrance and Reconciliation (May 8) is to be celebrated instead of the Victory Day (May 9), and the Day of the Defender of the Homeland (October 14) is to replace the Soviet day of the same name (February 23). Both canons coexist rather than compete with each other, and there are also regional differences in the celebration of “new” and “old” holidays.
- There are differences in the level of knowledge of one’s own history presented by Poles and Ukrainians. The Poles knew better both the figures and the phenomena and events that were analyzed in the survey.
- In Ukraine, over half of the respondents believe that de-communization is unnecessary. In Poland, opinions were divided almost symmetrically: 38% deem de-communization unnecessary, while 40% think it is necessary. It is worth noting that in Poland almost one in four respondents (22%) does not have an opinion on this matter, while in Ukraine, the undecided represent only 8%. In both countries people strongly convinced of the need for de-communization (i.e. those who responded that it is “definitely needed”) most often considered that the parliament should have an initiative in this matter. People with less decisive views, or “rather” perceiving the need for de-communization, were more likely to give initiative to citizens – residents, local authorities or expert circles. Perhaps the determined advocates of de-communization did not trust their fellow citizens and therefore would like this matter to be carried out by the authorities without engaging in discussions with the society.
- Considering Poles ‘and Ukrainians’ attitude toward mutual historical guilt, the actions of both Polish and Ukrainian states in the area of common history evaluation, which have been performed for several years, should be assessed as ineffective. In Poland, the society – according to its own conviction – “knows” everything about history and

tells an “agreed” narrative about its own history and about the activities of neighboring states and nations towards it. Polish society is clearly not ready to accept any proposed corrections of this image. Through resolutions and laws adopted in the parliament, the country presses Ukraine regarding the classification of Volhynia crimes as genocide. The latter state is perceived as one whose society does not “know” much about history, feels a “hunger” for it and is in the process of establishing an “agreed upon” narrative. Such activities of the Polish state do not take into account the subjectivity of its partner, its political status and level of historical consciousness. On the contrary, it can be seen that Ukrainian authorities take advantage of the fact that the Volhynia issue has become very unambiguous and important for Polish politicians and Polish public opinion. Namely, they present to their own and international public the image of Poland which is controlled by a certain historical “obsession” and wants mainly to confirm its moral advantage. Pointing to this allows the Ukrainian authorities to maintain the view that the crime in Volhynia was only a small episode in the whole line of historical relations between the two nations, and as such, it does not change the general account of wrongs and injustices which burden both parties equally. It does not seem that such a policy of memory – of both parties – could lead to reconciliation between them.

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