

## UKRAINIANS SUPPORT POPULISM DUE TO ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGES, POOR COMMUNICATION AND LACK OF CRITICAL THINKING. IT CAN BE CHANGED

Support for populism is critically high in Ukraine. The study of the [Centre for Economic Strategy](#) shows that, on average, 59% of Ukrainians support populist policies and regard them as realistic. Moreover, on average, 84% support populist policies.

These figures are dangerous for the economy. They mean that most Ukrainians not only support abstract populist policies, but also believe that they can be implemented. So, they will demand their implementation from politicians.

According to the CES study, one of the sources of high support for populism is insufficient reform communication. Proper communication towards most disadvantaged groups of population is especially important.

A person can change their attitude towards a particular proposal if alternatives to populist policies are communicated to them. Such communication may be more effective if arguments are personalized and tailored to the needs and concerns of a particular individual.

Such communication strategy is able to significantly increase the support of unpopular reforms and reduce populist sentiments. Among the respondents surveyed by CES, support for populism dropped from an average of 84% to 54% after they learned about the alternatives to populist policies.

Economically disadvantaged people are most inclined to be in favour of populist promises. The study shows that those who live in villages, have no higher education, or have a small salary are more likely to support populism. If the interests of these people are not taken into account, or their interests are given less consideration than those of better-off people, it can incentivize them to support populism.

However, region and age do not affect the level of support for populism. Despite a greater access to the Internet and all the resources available there, young and older Ukrainians do not differ much in terms of populism support. There is no significant difference in support for populism between the residents of different regions. Although East and West usually vote for different politicians, they all want the populist policies to be implemented.

Another reason for populist sentiments among Ukrainians is the lack of critical thinking when analysing economic policy. A higher level of critical thinking helps understand that populist policies will lead to negative consequences.

The full study is available at: <https://ces.org.ua/populism-paper/>

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Table 1. Support and realism of populist proposals

Proposal	% of people who believe it will have a positive impact on the well-being of their family	% of people who believe it will have a positive impact on the well-being of their family and think that the candidate they support can implement it
To introduce state regulation of prices for medicines and products	90	75
To increase the minimum pension up to UAH 5000	88	63
State-guaranteed employment for all citizens	87	56
To reduce gas price by half	87	54
To direct gas produced in Ukraine for the needs of the population	87	70
<b>Average value for all reforms</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>59</b>
The state should make employers increase a salary up to \$ 1,000	81	52
The maximum salary should be no more than 5 times the minimum wage	80	54
To reduce the retirement age because many fail to live up to the pension	74	54

Table 2. Top 3 most successful changes of opinion

Initial wording	Initial support of the populist proposal, %	Support of the populist proposal after providing the alternative, %	Wording with the alternative provided.
State-guaranteed employment for all citizens	87	23	State-guaranteed employment for all citizens / It is the responsibility of each individual to look for a job
To reduce gas price by half	87	36	Cheap gas for everyone at the state expense / Cheap gas only for the poor
To reduce the retirement age because many fail to live up to the pension	74	38	It's better to work longer and to get a higher pension / It's better to retire early even if the pension is low