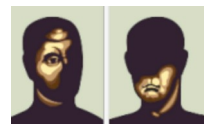


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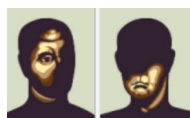
Institute for Political
Studies
“Political Sphere”



BELARUSIAN POLITICS AND CULTURE IN UKRAINIAN PUBLIC OPINION

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2026

Belarusian Politics and Culture in Ukrainian Public Opinion (2022–2025)

Summary

The Belarusian authorities' support for Russia as an ally in its war against Ukraine has profoundly changed Ukrainian society's attitudes towards the Belarusian state and its leadership, as well as towards Belarusians in general. Since 2022, the Political Sphere Institute has monitored Ukrainian public opinion within the framework of the Princes Ostrogski Belarusian-Ukrainian Expert Forum, tracking the main trends and problems in attitudes towards Belarusians and the Belarusian state. The findings are important for understanding the state of Belarusian-Ukrainian relations and their prospects, both during the war and after its possible conclusion. The study also draws comparisons with similar Ukrainian studies and with attitudes towards Belarus in other countries.

Research methods and timeframe. Three survey waves were conducted using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI): 2022 (1,026 respondents, 17–19 August), 2023 (1,022 respondents, 14–16 October) and 2025 (1,000 respondents, 13–23 October). The sampling error is 3.1%, with a probability of 0.95%. The Political Sphere Institute designed the study and analysed the data. Interviews in Ukraine were conducted in cooperation with the research company InfoSapiens.

The survey asked about Ukrainians' general attitudes towards Belarusians (citizens of Belarus),¹ showing how the war has changed the traditionally positive image of Belarusians in Ukrainian society.

Main dividing lines in Ukrainian society

Before examining the findings in detail, it is useful to outline the main divisions in Ukrainian society that influence positive or negative attitudes towards Belarusians and Belarus.

From a Belarusian perspective, it is especially important to distinguish at least two positions: Belarusians who support the policies of the Belarusian and Russian states, and those who are critical of them. The study shows that only some Ukrainians make this distinction. For others, it does not exist: attitudes towards the Belarusian state are automatically extended to all citizens of Belarus and probably even to Belarusians living in Ukraine.

Factors behind positive and negative attitudes. How, then, can we identify the profile of Ukrainians who view Belarusians positively or negatively?

Age. People over 50 have substantially more sympathy for Belarusians (+15.9 percentage points) than those under 39. This may reflect different information sources or greater experience of positive interaction before the war. As foreign policy choices diverged over the past 15–20 years, social distance between the countries increased, affecting younger

¹ Our hypothesis is that, in popular perceptions, Ukrainians understand “Belarusians” to mean all citizens of Belarus, as well as everyone who identifies as Belarusian abroad. This study focuses on the first group: citizens of Belarus.

age groups more strongly. A shared Soviet experience, with a common information and cultural space, also plays a role. Its influence should not be overstated, however. People now aged 50 were only 15 when the USSR collapsed. No significant differences are recorded within this group (for example, between those aged 50–59 and 60+).

Language. Russian-speaking and bilingual respondents have much more positive attitudes towards Belarus: +19.9 percentage points compared with Ukrainian speakers. Positive coverage of Belarus, both official and alternative, may be more common in the Russian-language information space than in Ukrainian.

Financial situation. Financial circumstances are another important factor. People on low and middle incomes have more positive attitudes (+13.3 percentage points) than affluent respondents. This may reflect less interest in politics among the former group, as well as different patterns of information consumption.

Region. Regional differences require more cautious interpretation. Additional statistical tests show that region has no independent significance for general attitudes towards Belarusians: the differences initially observed are largely explained by the varying representation of language groups. Region should therefore not be included alongside age, language and financial situation in the core profile of positive or negative attitudes towards Belarusians.

Nevertheless, differences are visible on several questions about Belarusian foreign and domestic policy. The most consistent divide is between Kyiv and the eastern regions. Respondents in the capital more often give harsher and more categorical assessments: 79.1% in Kyiv describe Belarus as fully authoritarian, compared with 40.6% in the East. Belarus is described as effectively occupied by Russia by 29.1% in Kyiv and 19.0% in the East. Only 0.7% in Kyiv consider Lukashenka Belarus's legitimate leader, compared with 12.6% in the East. Awareness of Belarusian units fighting on Ukraine's side is also markedly higher in Kyiv: 83.4% versus 48.9% in the East.

Factors with no influence: direct contact and familiarity with Belarusian authors. Surprisingly, personal contact with Belarusians has virtually no effect on attitudes. Such contact is indeed slightly more common among those with positive attitudes: 10.7%, compared with 7.3% across the whole sample. The difference is only +3.4 percentage points and cannot substantially explain positive attitudes. Among those with negative attitudes, contact is less common, at 5.5%, but the difference from the sample average is again small.

Of particular importance, 89.3% of respondents with positive attitudes towards Belarusians have no such contact. In most cases, therefore, these attitudes do not arise from direct personal interaction. At the same time, 94.5% of those with negative attitudes also lack such contact. The opposite position is thus usually shaped by the wider information, political and cultural context rather than personal experience. Statistical testing shows that a relationship between personal contact and attitudes towards Belarusians exists, but is weak.

The level of exposure to information also has no substantial effect. Answers to "How often do you encounter content by Belarusian authors?" are almost identical among respondents with positive and negative attitudes. Regular exposure, meaning at least once

a month or more often, is reported by 27.8% in both groups. On this measure, therefore, there is virtually no difference between the groups.

Among other sociodemographic characteristics, gender, settlement size, marital status and number of children also showed no significant independent effect. Tests revealed no consistent differences comparable to those associated with age, language or financial situation. Any individual differences do not form an independent profile of positive or negative attitudes towards Belarusians and are most likely related to respondents' other characteristics.

Political assessments and sympathy or antipathy towards Belarusians

Attitudes towards Belarusians are clearly associated with how Ukrainians assess Belarus's current political system, its dependence on Russia and Ukraine's possible approach to the Belarusian authorities and democratic opposition. This relationship is neither simple nor unambiguous. Even among respondents who view Belarusians positively, most remain critical of the Belarusian state, see Belarus as authoritarian and dependent on Russia, and do not recognise Aliaksandr Lukashenka as a legitimate leader. The groups differ primarily in how categorical their assessments are, rather than in their overall direction.

This is most apparent in assessments of Belarus's political system. Among respondents with negative attitudes towards Belarusians, 69.3% consider Belarus fully authoritarian, compared with 50.1% in the opposite group. Combining "fully" and "predominantly authoritarian" responses, 90.6% of those with negative attitudes and 73.9% of those with positive attitudes recognise Belarus as authoritarian. A critical view of the regime therefore predominates in both groups, but is much more categorical among those with negative attitudes.

A similar pattern appears in assessments of Belarus's foreign policy independence. The view that Belarus is heavily dependent on Russia again predominates, but those with negative attitudes more often choose stronger wording. Of these respondents, 41.6% believe Belarus is under Russia's complete control and another 27.6% describe it as effectively occupied by Russia. Among those with positive attitudes, the figures are lower: 31.3% and 22.3%, respectively. This group is also more likely to allow that Belarus has limited independence: 16.6% choose "an independent state with a substantially constrained foreign policy", compared with 5.8% in the opposite group.

Assessments of Aliaksandr Lukashenka's legitimacy also differ in their severity. In both groups, most do not see him as Belarus's legitimate leader reflecting the will of the people. Negative responses are stronger among those with negative attitudes towards Belarusians: 65.1% answer "no" and another 19.4% "rather no", totalling 84.5%. Negative assessments also predominate among those with positive attitudes, but are less common: 53.4% answer "no" and 15.7% "rather no", totalling 69.1%. Meanwhile, full or partial recognition of Lukashenka's legitimacy is higher among those with positive attitudes: 21.9%, versus 12.5% among those with negative attitudes.

The differences are particularly pronounced on the question of what policy Ukraine should pursue towards Belarus. Among those with negative attitudes, 36.6% support

a complete severance of relations with the Belarusian authorities, compared with only 12.1% of those with positive attitudes: a difference of 24.5 percentage points. The latter more often support a compromise or pragmatic approach: 32.5% propose seeking a compromise, while 18.2% consider maintaining relations with Aliaksandr Lukashenka acceptable if it benefits Ukraine.

Support for the Belarusian democratic opposition as an alternative to the current authorities, however, is almost identical: 37.0% among those with positive attitudes and 36.3% among those with negative attitudes. This is an important finding: negative attitudes towards Belarusians strengthen support for a complete break with the Belarusian authorities, but do not in themselves imply greater support for Belarus's democratic opposition.

The forms of Ukraine's engagement with the Belarusian democratic opposition merit separate consideration. Those with negative attitudes are much more likely to oppose developing any contacts at state level: 25.7%, compared with 9.8% among those with positive attitudes. The latter more often choose flexible forms of engagement: 17.6% support comprehensive cooperation and open support, while 26.9% favour developing contacts without publicising them. Those with negative attitudes more often choose limited official contacts (32.3%), while open support receives less backing (11.0%).

Awareness of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya is somewhat higher among respondents with positive attitudes: 71.9% versus 65.7%, although most in both groups have heard of her. Awareness of Belarusian units fighting on Ukraine's side hardly distinguishes the groups: 63.6% of those with negative attitudes and 60.4% of those with positive attitudes have heard of them. Knowledge of Belarusian cultural and historical figures likewise creates no marked division: around two thirds of each group know none of those listed in the questionnaire.

Thus, sympathy or antipathy towards Belarusians is primarily associated with perceptions of Belarus's foreign and domestic policy. Respondents with negative attitudes more often see Belarus as fully authoritarian and dependent on Russia, and favour a complete break with the Belarusian authorities. Those with positive attitudes do not deny the regime's authoritarian character or Belarus's dependence on Russia, but more often choose less categorical assessments and more pragmatic or compromise approaches to Ukrainian policy. Cultural knowledge, exposure to Belarusian authors, awareness of Belarusian volunteers and even personal contact with Belarusians explain these differences much less strongly than attitudes towards the political system, Lukashenka, Russia and the form of relations between Ukraine and Belarus.

Political assessments and sympathy or antipathy towards Belarusians



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Key indicators: differences from the overall sample

Question / indicator	All respondents	Positive attitudes: difference from all respondents	Negative attitudes: difference from all respondents
B3. Belarus is a fully authoritarian state	58.27%	-8.2 pp	+11.0 pp
B4. Belarus is independent or partly autonomous in foreign policy	13.45%	+8.6 pp	-6.3 pp
B4. Belarus is under Russia's complete control or effectively occupied	61.17%	-7.6 pp	+8.0 pp
B5. Lukashenka is not, or is rather not, legitimate	75.46%	-6.4 pp	+9.0 pp
B6. Know or have heard of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya	65.99%	+5.9 pp	-0.3 pp
B8. Completely sever relations with the Belarusian authorities	26.35%	-14.3 pp	+10.3 pp
B8. Maintain relations with Lukashenka if beneficial to Ukraine	12.27%	+5.9 pp	-4.4 pp
B8. Seek a compromise between the two options	24.68%	+7.8 pp	-5.6 pp
B9. Do not develop state-level contacts with the democratic opposition	18.43%	-8.6 pp	+7.3 pp
B10. Concern about Lukashenka's reaction and worsening relations	14.7%	+16.4 pp	-2.2 pp
B10. Unclear extent of Russian influence on the opposition	67.9%	-8.6 pp	+1.4 pp

Only indicators with the most marked differences are shown; differences are relative to all respondents.

General attitudes towards citizens of Belarus

The survey findings show that attitudes towards Belarusians recorded shortly after the war began have remained fairly stable, with no significant changes between summer 2022 and autumn 2025. The overall distribution can be described as follows: around a third of Ukrainian society (35–38%) retains a positive or mostly positive attitude towards Belarusians, although only 3–4% are entirely positive.

Fewer than one fifth of respondents (14–17%) view Belarusians entirely negatively, and this share has declined slightly since 2023. Around one third (33–35%) have a somewhat negative attitude. Together, these last two categories account for approximately half of society.

The war has thus severely damaged the image of Belarusians in Ukraine, but attitudes are far from wholly negative. Around a third of society retains some sympathy for Belarusians, while about half of Ukrainians view them negatively.

How do you currently feel about Belarusians (citizens of Belarus)?

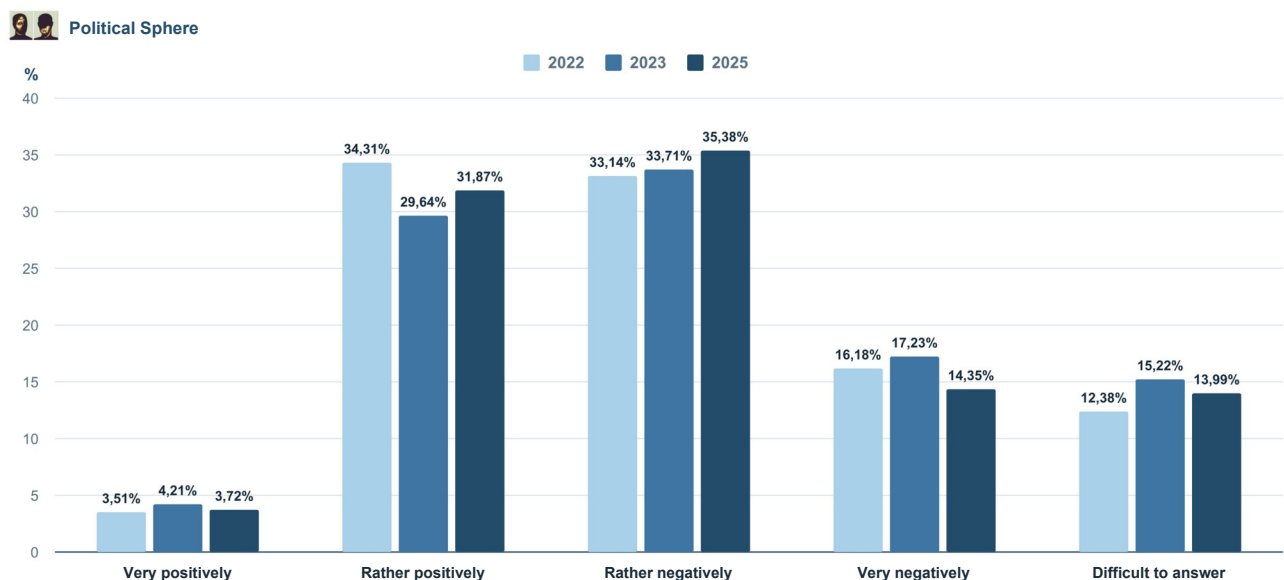


Figure 1. How do you currently feel about Belarusians (citizens of Belarus)?

The study found that attitudes towards Belarusians are mainly shaped by the media and previous cultural and political experience, as direct contact is relatively limited. To measure this, a new question was introduced in 2025: *“Do you have friends, relatives, colleagues or other people (in Belarus, or from Belarus but now living in other countries) with whom you have been in contact at least once in the past year?”* Only 7.3% answered yes. Personal ties with Belarusians, both inside and outside Belarus, therefore involve only a very small share of Ukrainians.

Do you know people from Belarus with whom you have had contact at least once in the past year? 2025

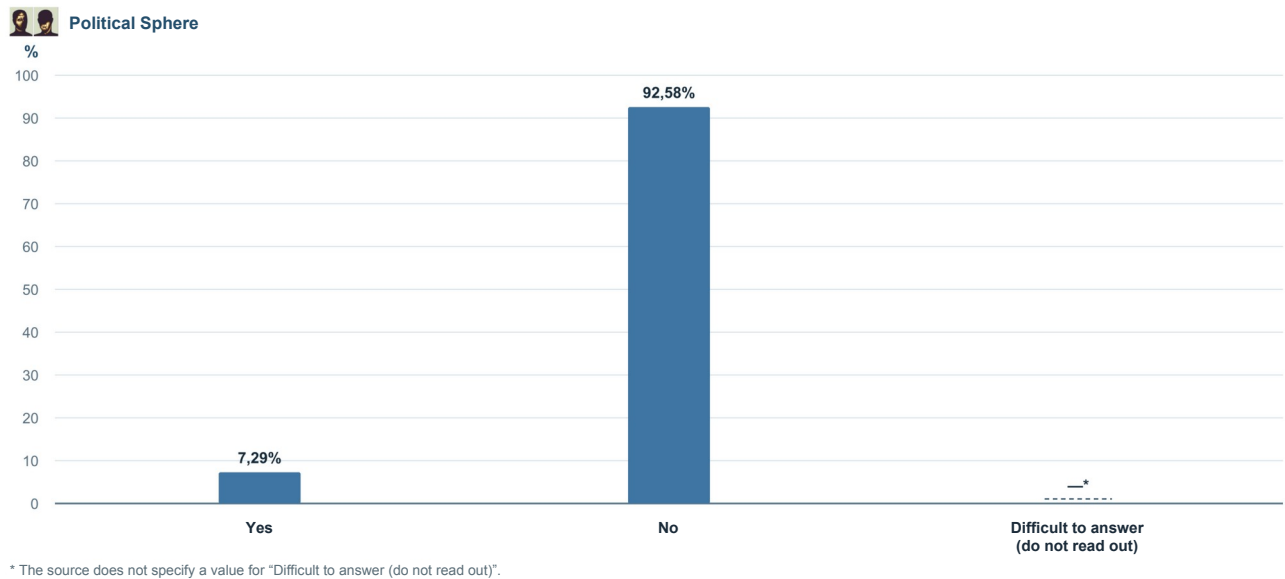


Figure 2. Do you know people from Belarus with whom you have had contact at least once in the past year? 2025

Belarusian authors reach only a small part of the Ukrainian audience. Asked “*How often do you encounter content by authors of Belarusian origin on social and political issues or culture?*”, around 60% said never, or less often than a few times a year. Only about 9% maintain relatively close exposure to Belarusian politics or culture. This is still a substantial audience with which the Belarusian community can engage. Up to 25% encounter Belarusian content irregularly and occasionally.

How often do you encounter content by authors of Belarusian origin on social and political issues or culture? 2025

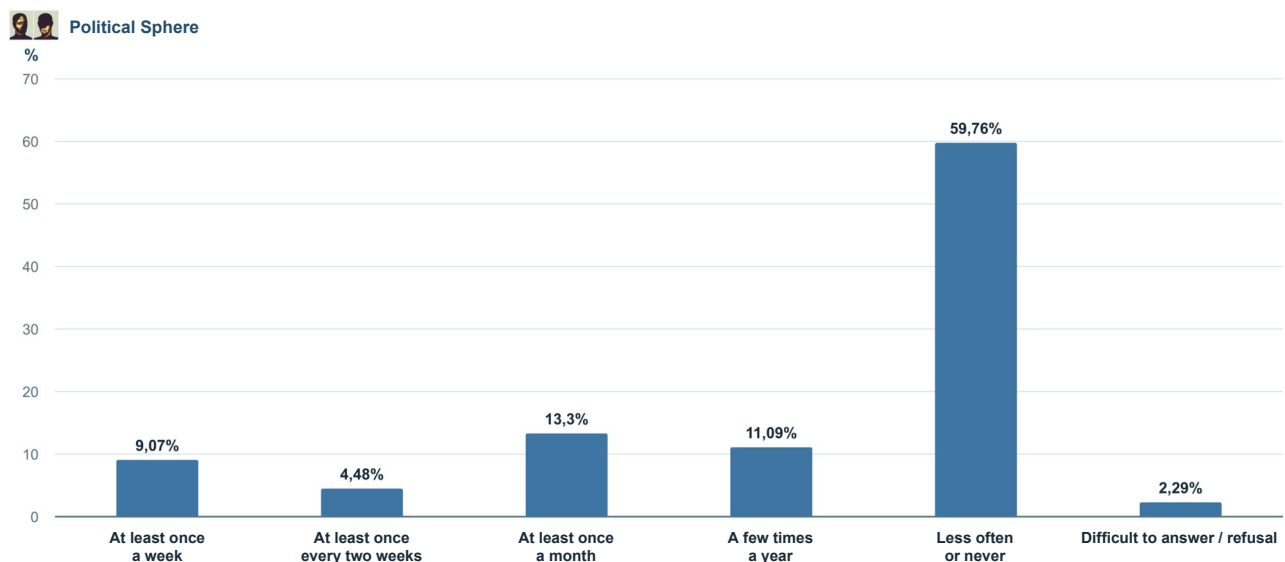


Figure 3. How often do you encounter content by authors of Belarusian origin on social and political issues or culture? 2025

Belarus as a state

An important element of Ukrainian public opinion is the image of the Belarusian state, particularly its political system and foreign policy. The survey asked two questions in this area; the responses are presented below.

In your view, which of the following statements is more accurate?

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Statement	2025 (%)
Belarus is a fully democratic state	2,32%
Belarus is a predominantly democratic state	6,56%
Belarus is a predominantly authoritarian state	22,24%
Belarus is a fully authoritarian state	58,27%
Difficult to answer / refusal	10,61%

Table 6. In your view, which of the following statements is more accurate?

Assessing present-day Belarus's political system, an absolute majority of Ukrainians (58.27%) described it as fully authoritarian, and another 22.24% as predominantly authoritarian. No more than 10% see Belarus as democratic to any degree. A substantial share also regards Belarus as a form of soft authoritarianism (22.24%).

In your view, which of the following statements is more accurate?

 Political Sphere

Statement	2025 (%)
Belarus is an independent state with a fully independent foreign policy	3,38%
Belarus is an independent state whose foreign policy is substantially influenced by Russia	10,07%
Belarus is a dependent state whose foreign policy is almost entirely determined by Russia	20,41%
Belarus is a dependent state under Russia's complete control	36,77%
Belarus is a state effectively occupied by Russia	24,4%
Difficult to answer / refusal	4,98%

Table 7. In your view, which of the following statements is more accurate?

Ukrainian public opinion is no less united on Belarus's foreign policy position. An absolute majority, over 60%, considers its dependence on Russia very high. Of these, 36.77% see Belarus as a dependent state under Russia's complete control, and another 24.4% as effectively occupied by Russia. Around 20% believe some autonomy remains, but that Russia still "almost entirely" determines Belarus's foreign policy.

Narratives of Belarus's lack of independence and heavy dependence on Russia dominate Ukraine's information space. These may positively affect attitudes towards Belarusians by at least partly relieving them of responsibility for assisting the aggression. This is especially true of the "occupation" narrative. At the same time, such narratives call into question the political agency of Belarus and Belarusians.

Nevertheless, around 10% consider Belarus an independent state, including 3% who see it as fully independent.

Belarusian politics

The first question in the monitoring survey concerned Ukrainians' assessment of the current Belarusian leadership's legitimacy. Here, legitimacy means the extent to which holding office accords with democratic procedures expressing the will of Belarusian citizens. Responses can therefore indicate how far Ukrainians associate the current Belarusian authorities' policies with the support and expectations of Belarusians as a people.

This is particularly important because, for many years before 2022, A. Lukashenka was one of the most popular foreign politicians in Ukraine, with very high approval ratings. Although the overall pattern of attitudes remains (an absolute majority firmly rejects him as Belarus's legitimate leader), opinion has shifted noticeably towards recognising his legitimacy. The share refusing to recognise him as legitimate fell by more than 10%, from 68.1% to 57.6%. This mainly reflected growth in all other categories, particularly those fully recognising his legitimacy (from 5% to 9.45%), and increases of 2–2.5% in the less categorical "rather yes" and "rather no" answers. The passage of time and the fading of the events of 2020 from the information space have thus improved the Belarusian authorities' image, although this does not yet apply to most Ukrainians.

Do you consider Aliaksandr Lukashenka the legitimate leader of Belarus, reflecting the will of the people?



Political Sphere

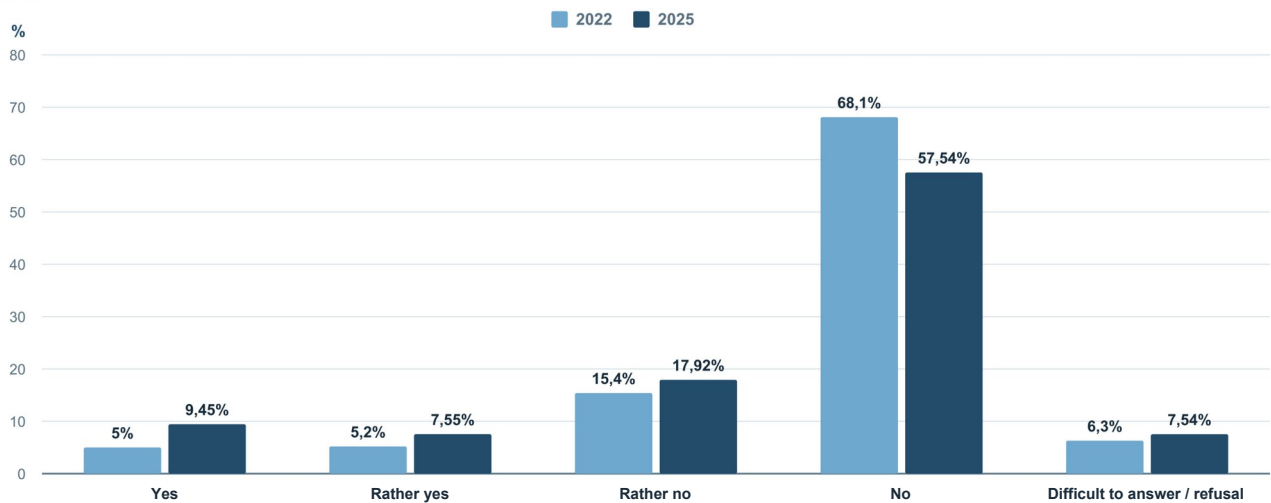


Figure 4. Do you consider Aliaksandr Lukashenka the legitimate leader of Belarus, reflecting the will of the people?

The trend is reversed for Belarus's alternative political forces. Around two thirds answered yes to "Do you know Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya?", the internationally best-known figure in the Belarusian democratic movement. Between 2022 and 2025, this share fell by more than 10%, from 76.5% to 65.99%.

Do you know Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the Belarusian opposition leader who challenged Aliaksandr Lukashenka in the 2020 election?



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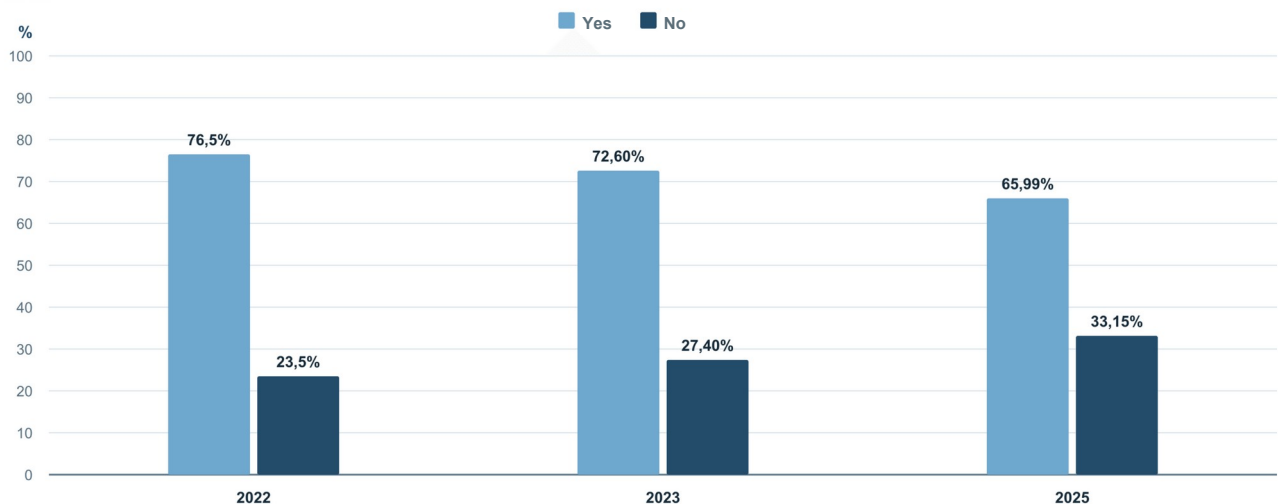


Figure 5. Do you know Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the Belarusian opposition leader who challenged Aliaksandr Lukashenka in the 2020 election?

Surprisingly, a similar trend affected Belarusian armed formations fighting on Ukraine's side, the best known being the Kalinouski Regiment. In 2022, almost 70% of Ukrainians knew about the existence and activities of these formations. The share fell to 62.16% in 2023 and remained at approximately that level in 2025 (61.48%). While awareness of S. Tsikhanouskaya declined gradually, for Belarusian armed

formations the first year was the most critical for their public visibility: after the initial wave of coverage and novelty, the Belarusian presence in Ukraine’s information space declined considerably.

Have you heard of Belarusian units currently fighting on Ukraine’s side, in particular the Kastus Kalinowski Regiment, Pahonia and others?

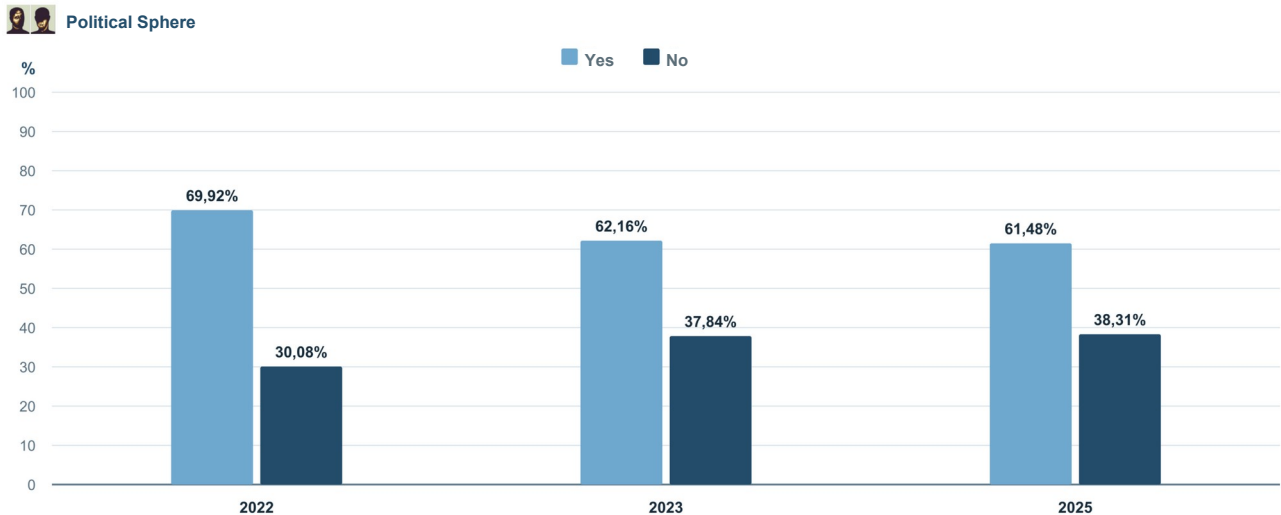


Figure 6. Have you heard of Belarusian units currently fighting on Ukraine’s side, in particular the Kastus Kalinowski Regiment, Pahonia and others?

A separate set of questions addressed what policy, in the public’s view, Ukraine’s government should pursue towards the Belarusian authorities and alternative political forces.

Multiple answers were permitted to the question about the policy Ukraine should adopt towards Belarus’s official authorities. Compared with previous years, respondents much more often chose just one option, reducing the total of responses from 134.5% to 108.9%. This can be seen as a sign of consolidating opinion. The decline mainly reflected a substantial fall in support for “completely sever relations with the Belarusian authorities”. This was particularly marked between 2023 and 2025. Overall, between 2022 and 2025, the share choosing this option more than halved, from 57.91% to 26.35%.

What policy should Ukraine pursue towards Belarus?

 Political Sphere

Response option	2022	2023	2025
Completely sever relations with the Belarusian authorities	57,91%	49,19%	26,35%
Maintain relations with Aliaksandr Lukashenka if beneficial	3,52%	4,77%	12,27%
Seek a compromise between the two options above	27,79%	27,76%	24,68%
Support the Belarusian democratic opposition as an alternative to the current authorities in Belarus	37,89%	31,50%	35,43%
Difficult to answer / refusal	7,42%	9,32%	10,18%
Total	134,53%	122,53%	108,91%

Table 8. What policy should Ukraine pursue towards Belarus?

Two factors probably explain this. First, the rupture had already become an evident reality of bilateral relations and was no longer seen as a necessary, urgent step. Second, some sections of Ukrainian society have become more positive towards the Belarusian authorities and the prospect of renewed cooperation. In particular, only 3.5% of Ukrainians in 2022 favoured maintaining relations with Aliaksandr Lukashenka “if beneficial”, and this share increased by 2025. Those favouring a compromise between a hard and soft line remained at roughly one quarter, albeit with a slight decline from 27.8% to 24.7%.

Ukrainian society is less united on the democratic opposition, and trends over the period moved in different directions. On the one hand, opposition to developing contacts with the Belarusian opposition at state level declined noticeably, from 25.6% to 18.4%. Support for developing only official contacts through meetings and statements initially fell significantly, from 24.1% to 14.5%, but rose to 29.4% by 2025.

What policy should Ukraine pursue towards the democratic opposition in Belarus?

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Response option	2022	2023	2025
Do not develop contacts at state level	25,61%	27,84%	18,43%
Develop state-level contacts, but limit them to official meetings and statements	24,06%	14,45%	29,4%
Develop comprehensive cooperation and provide open support	18,36%	22,60%	14,08%
Develop state-level contacts, but do not publicise them	12,7%	16,26%	22,03%
Difficult to answer / refusal	19,27%	18,85%	16,06%

Table 9. What policy should Ukraine pursue towards the democratic opposition in Belarus?

The share favouring exclusively informal contacts, kept unofficial and out of public view, rose from 12.7% to 22.0%. Support for comprehensive cooperation with official and public backing increased from 18.4% in 2022 to 22.6% the following year, but dropped to 14.1% by 2025.

Overall, Ukrainian public opinion favours cooperation between the Ukrainian state and Belarusian democratic forces, but mainly at a symbolic level and through informal, non-public channels. The share supporting comprehensive public backing by the state remains small.

A cultural vacuum

The final question concerned Ukrainian public awareness of Belarusian culture; more specifically, familiarity with important Belarusian cultural and political figures and contemporary writers.

Which of the following Belarusian cultural figures do you know?

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Person / response option	2025
Euphrosyne of Polatsk	2,75%
Francysk Skaryna	4,38%
Kanstantsin (Kastus) Kalinouski	20,94%
Yakub Kolas	7,5%
Yanka Kupala	12,67%
Uladzimir Karatkevich	5,24%
Svetlana Alexievich	4,15%
Usiaslau of Polatsk (the Sorcerer)	2,76%
I know none of them	64,99%
Difficult to answer / refusal	0,73%

Table 10. Which of the following Belarusian cultural figures do you know?

The list included figures potentially familiar to Ukrainian audiences through shared early history (Usiaslau the Sorcerer, Euphrosyne of Polatsk), literary and cultural contacts during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods (U. Karatkevich, Y. Kupala, Y. Kolas, F. Skaryna), contemporary literature (S. Alexievich), or current political events (K. Kalinouski).

The results showed very limited Ukrainian knowledge of Belarusian culture and literature overall. Some 64.99% said they knew none of the listed figures from Belarusian culture, politics and literature.

Kastus Kalinouski was the best-known figure (20.9%). This clearly reflects the activities of the Kalinouski Regiment within Ukraine's Armed Forces rather than detailed knowledge of the 1863–1864 uprising.

The Belarusian poet Yanka Kupala ranked second (12.7%), perhaps because he featured in the Soviet school curriculum, or through other cultural references. The poet and prose writer Yakub Kolas was also somewhat better known than the remaining figures (7.5%), possibly for the same reasons. Awareness of all the other listed political and cultural figures, including Nobel laureate in literature Svetlana Alexievich, ranged from 2.7% to 4.4%, almost at the margin of statistical error. This demonstrates the limited representation of Belarusian history, culture and literature in Ukraine's information and educational space: cultural invisibility. Ukrainians tend to perceive Belarus as a political phenomenon rather than a distinctive culture.

Comparison with similar studies in Ukraine

Various research groups study Ukrainian public opinion towards Belarus. Their methodologies differ from ours, but

offer additional perspectives on Ukrainian public opinion. We believe a brief overview of these studies helps deepen the analysis.

Political Sphere's own research adds a distinct perspective: it records attitudes not only towards Belarus as a state, but separately towards Belarusian citizens, the Belarusian authorities, the democratic opposition, Belarusian volunteers and Belarusians' cultural presence in Ukraine. This helps identify more precisely the boundary between negative attitudes towards the Belarusian state and attitudes towards Belarusians as people.

Razumkov Centre for Economic and Political Studies. The Razumkov Centre most often includes Belarus in questions about positive or negative attitudes towards individual countries.² Results have been published for at least four waves containing this question: March 2021², April 2023², February 2024³ and October 2024⁴.

The findings show that most Ukrainians viewed Belarus positively in 2021, before Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine. Positive assessments totalled 58.4%, compared with 31% negative.

By April 2023, the trend had reversed. Positive responses fell to 12.4%, almost a fivefold decline. Negative assessments increased more than 2.5 times to 80.7%, which can be interpreted as a new consensus. Attitudes reached their coldest point in February 2024, when only 7.9% gave a positive assessment. The undecided share also halved compared with 2021, indirectly confirming that this trend had become established.

The full-scale war thus had an exceptionally strong effect on Ukrainians' attitudes towards Belarus, not merely worsening but effectively reversing them. October 2024 findings confirm this: positive assessments remained below 10%, while negative assessments were still above 80%.

Compared with the Razumkov Centre's data, our study presents a less radical picture when the question concerns Belarusians as citizens rather than Belarus as a state. In Razumkov surveys after 2022, negative attitudes towards Belarus as a country exceed 80%, whereas in our monitoring, negative and somewhat negative attitudes towards Belarusian citizens account for about half of respondents. This confirms that

² Respondents were asked a closed-ended question with five options: "entirely positive, mostly positive, mostly negative, entirely negative, difficult to answer".

[<https://razumkov.org.ua/napriamky/sotsiologichni-doslidzhennia/zovnishnopolitychni-orientatsii-gromadian-ukrainy-otsinka-zovnishnoi-polityky-vlady-stavlennia-do-inozemnykh-derzhav-ta-politykiv-liutyi-berezen-2023r>]

³ Razumkov Centre, "Citizens' assessment of the authorities' foreign policy, the effectiveness of international support and the impact of foreign policy factors on Ukraine", January 2024.

[<https://razumkov.org.ua/napriamky/sotsiologichni-doslidzhennia/otsinka-gromadianamy-zovnishnoi-polityky-vlady-efektyvnosti-mizhnarodnoi-pidtrymky-ta-vplyvu-zovnishnopolitychnykh-chynnykiv-na-ukrainu-sichen-2024r>]

⁴ Razumkov Centre, "Citizens' support for Ukraine's accession to the European Union and NATO. Attitudes towards foreign countries. Attitudes towards peace negotiations", September 2024.

[<https://razumkov.org.ua/napriamky/sotsiologichni-doslidzhennia/pidtrymka-gromadianamy-vstupu-ukrainy-do-yevropeiskogo-soiuзу-ta-nato-stavlennia-do-inozemnykh-derzhav-stavlennia-do-myrynykh-peregovoriv-veresen-2024r>]

some Ukrainians still distinguish between the Belarusian state and Belarusian society, even while the overall perception of Belarus remains highly negative.

The Rating Sociological Group has also published data on Ukrainians' attitudes towards Belarus. From 2014 to 2018, it regularly asked about "warm" or "cold" attitudes towards the country. Only 3–9% reported "cold" attitudes, compared with 39–56% reporting "warm" ones. Changes mainly reflected A. Lukashenka's statements and stance on the confrontation between Ukraine and Russia, but "warm" attitudes clearly predominated.⁵

Surveys in 2018–2022 also asked about attitudes towards Belarusian citizens, enabling an analysis of the war's impact. Before the war, "warm" attitudes stood at 73–67%, "neutral" at 25–27% and "cold" at 2–4%. After February 2022, the situation changed dramatically.⁶

"Warm" attitudes fell to 22% in spring 2022 and 10% by autumn that year, while "cold" attitudes rose first to 33% and later to 52%.⁶ Interestingly, a substantial share moved to a "neutral" position: 42% in April 2022 and 34% in August.⁶ The response to the war thus involved not only growing negativity, but also a marked increase in uncertain or reserved perceptions.⁶

In other words, the war fundamentally affected relations between the populations of the two countries as well. Another March 2022 survey confirms this. It asked: *"What about Belarus: are only the Belarusian authorities to blame, or are the authorities and the people equally to blame?"* Some 70% blamed only the Belarusian authorities, while just 24% answered "both the authorities and the people".⁷

Rating's data provide an important comparison with our study because they also distinguish attitudes towards Belarus as a country from attitudes towards its citizens. Our 2025 findings confirm that, after the initial shock of the war, attitudes towards Belarusians as citizens stabilised in a more complex pattern: around one third retain positive or somewhat positive attitudes, around half are negative or somewhat negative, and some remain undecided.

The final major group of studies asked about relations between states. Even before the war, Ukrainians did not regard Belarus as a foreign policy ally. In April 2021, positive assessments ("definitely an ally" and

⁵ Rating Sociological Group, "Trends in social and political views in Ukraine", 15–31 March 2018. [https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/685c279caf66f4023ad2cab4/696e0fbfb9e5e8b27610b36_2018_03-national_ua-official_compressed.pdf]

⁶ Rating Sociological Group, "Seventeenth nationwide survey: identity, patriotism, values", 17–18 August 2022. [https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/685c279caf66f4023ad2cab4/68da4334e57b686729229f16_rg_ua_1000_independence_082022_xvii_press_compressed.pdf]

⁷ Rating Sociological Group, "Nationwide survey: Ukraine at war", 1 March 2022. [https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/685c279caf66f4023ad2cab4/68da4aaf76bcda200408e9e3_rg_ua_1200_032022_ru_bl_compressed.pdf]

“rather an ally”) totalled only 30%, compared with 22% negative assessments (“rather hostile” and “definitely hostile”). Neutral assessments remained the largest category at 43%.⁸

The December 2021 survey shows this trend intensifying: positive responses fell to 23%, negative assessments rose sharply to 48%, and the neutral share declined to 22%.⁸

Negative assessments grew primarily at the expense of neutrality. “Neutral” responses fell from 43% to 22% (–21 percentage points), while combined negative assessments rose from 22% to 48% (+26 percentage points).⁸

After the war began, negative perceptions of Belarus became established and more radical. By March 2022, negative assessments totalled 84% (“rather hostile”, 32%; “definitely hostile”, 52%), with just 4% positive and 4% neutral.⁹ By February 2024, the negative share reached 90%, mainly through growth in “definitely hostile” responses (from 52% to 71%), while “rather hostile” declined (from 32% to 19%). A near-consensus negative perception emerged in the first months of the war and has not only persisted but intensified as assessments became more radical.

These data align well with our findings on Ukraine’s policy towards the Belarusian authorities. Our survey also shows a gradual weakening of the hardest-line position: support for completely severing relations fell from 57.91% in 2022 to 26.35% in 2025. This does not mean trust in the Belarusian state has returned. It indicates a shift from the initial response of breaking ties towards a more differentiated and pragmatic view of possible policy approaches.

Kyiv International Institute of Sociology. The Kyiv International Institute of Sociology’s studies used the Bogardus social distance scale to measure respondents’ willingness to accept members of different ethnic groups in various forms of social interaction.

One methodological point is necessary. In the waves published on the website before 2022, the category “Belarusians” was unspecified: respondents could mean either citizens of Belarus or Belarusians living in Ukraine. The overall social distance index for Belarusians was 3.18–3.33, roughly between “neighbours” and “work colleagues”, which can be interpreted as a moderately positive attitude.¹⁰

⁸ Rating Sociological Group, “Social and political attitudes of the population”, 6–8 December 2021. [https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/685c279caf66f4023ad2cab4/693c1e9af0cb767103346040_rg_ua_2500_122021_press_compressed.pdf]

⁹ Rating Sociological Group, “Fifth nationwide survey: Ukraine at war”, 18 March 2022. [https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/685c279caf66f4023ad2cab4/68da49bd0a458a73700a6f32_rg_ua_1000_032022_v_pres_s_compressed.pdf]

¹⁰ Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, “Interethnic prejudice in Ukraine”, 8–23 September 2018. [<https://kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=793&page=95>]

From the 2022 wave onwards, the study divided “Belarusians” into two groups: those living in Ukraine and those living outside it. The published 2022, 2024 and 2026 waves show that the war in Ukraine and Belarus’s role in it substantially affected the indicator for both groups. The index was 4.37–4.47 for Belarusians living in Ukraine and 5.34–5.6 for those living in Belarus, indicating significantly greater social distance in the latter case.¹¹

This pattern also appears in the survey published on 29 January 2024. Social distance towards Belarusians remains high: 4.37 for those living in Ukraine and 5.34 for those living in Belarus, confirming the persistence of this gap.

Our own study also helps explain why social distance persists: only 7.3% of respondents have direct contact with Belarusians, while around 60% almost never encounter content by Belarusian authors. Attitudes towards Belarusians are therefore largely shaped by media and political images of Belarus, particularly the war, dependence on Russia and the Belarusian authorities’ role in aggression against Ukraine, rather than personal experience.

Main conclusions

Ukrainians’ attitudes towards Belarusians deteriorated significantly after the full-scale war began, but have remained relatively stable since 2022. Around half of Ukrainian society holds negative or somewhat negative attitudes, while about one third retains positive or somewhat positive attitudes. This means that Belarus’s role in the war has severely damaged Belarusians’ image in Ukraine, but has not produced a complete and uniform negative consensus.

Factors behind positive and negative attitudes. Attitudes towards Belarusians are most clearly associated with age, language and financial situation. More positive attitudes are more common among older age groups, Russian-speaking and bilingual respondents, and people on low and middle incomes. Region requires more cautious interpretation: it has no independent significance for general attitudes, as language composition explains some regional differences. However, region is important for understanding differences in political assessments of Belarus, Lukashenka, dependence on Russia and possible forms of contact with the Belarusian democratic opposition.

Factors that do not explain attitudes. Personal contact with Belarusians and familiarity with content by Belarusian authors do not appear to be strong explanations of differences in attitudes. Respondents with positive attitudes do indeed have slightly more contact with Belarusians, but the overwhelming majority even in this group has none. Exposure to content by Belarusian authors is virtually identical among those with positive and negative attitudes: regular exposure, meaning once a month or more often, is 27.8% in both groups.

Other sociodemographic characteristics tested also showed no significant independent effect. Gender, settlement size, marital status and number of children do not

¹¹ Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, “Interethnic prejudice in Ukraine, September 2022”, 7–13 September 2022. [<https://kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1150&page=51>]

form a distinct profile of positive or negative attitudes towards Belarusians comparable to age, language or financial situation.

Political assessments and sympathy or antipathy towards Belarusians. Sympathy or antipathy is primarily associated with how harshly respondents judge Belarus's political system, its dependence on Russia and Ukraine's possible policy towards the Belarusian authorities. Those with negative attitudes more often see Belarus as fully authoritarian, under Russia's complete control or effectively occupied by Russia, and more often support a complete severance of relations with the Belarusian authorities. Most respondents with positive attitudes also view the regime and dependence on Russia critically, but less categorically, and more often favour compromise or pragmatic approaches to Ukrainian policy.

Belarus as a state. Ukrainian public opinion primarily perceives Belarus as authoritarian and heavily dependent on Russia. An absolute majority considers its political system authoritarian and its foreign policy severely constrained or effectively controlled by Russia. The narrative of Belarus's lack of independence may partly reduce Belarusian society's responsibility for the regime's actions, but also calls into question the political agency of Belarus and Belarusians. A small share still sees Belarus as an independent state, but this remains a marginal view.

Belarusian politics and Ukraine's policy. Most Ukrainians do not recognise Aliaksandr Lukashenka as Belarus's legitimate leader, although this position has become less categorical since 2022. At the same time, awareness of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya and Belarusian armed formations fighting on Ukraine's side is declining. Ukraine's policy towards the Belarusian authorities is seeing a shift away from the initial hard line of a complete break: support for this position has fallen substantially. Public opinion tends to favour developing contacts with the Belarusian democratic opposition, mainly in limited, symbolic, formally restrained or non-public forms. Support for open, comprehensive cooperation remains relatively low.

A cultural vacuum. Belarusian culture and history are poorly represented in Ukrainian public awareness. Most respondents know none of the listed Belarusian cultural, historical or political figures. Kastus Kalinowski is the best known, probably because of the Kalinowski Regiment's role in the current war rather than knowledge of the nineteenth-century uprising. Awareness of classic and contemporary Belarusian writers remains low. This shows that, for a substantial share of Ukrainians, Belarus exists primarily as a state rather than a cultural phenomenon.

Comparison with Ukrainian studies. Data from other Ukrainian polling organisations confirm the overall scale of the negative shift in attitudes towards Belarus since the full-scale war began. Political Sphere's study, however, reveals a more complex picture: attitudes towards Belarus as a state, the Belarusian authorities and Belarusians as citizens do not fully coincide. Studies asking about Belarus as a country record much higher negativity. When questions concern Belarusians as citizens, negative attitudes remain very substantial but do not become a complete consensus. This confirms that some Ukrainians continue to distinguish between the Belarusian state and Belarusian society, even during the war and against a highly negative overall backdrop.