

SOCIOGRAPHY

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The Day of Ukrainian Writing and Language — 2021: Is the use of Ukrainian as an official language in the public sphere increasing?¹

In April 2019, the Ukrainian parliament passed a bill aiming to enhance the status of the Ukrainian language in all spheres of society. In July 2021, a number of new requirements (as part of language legislation) came into force. The emphasis was placed on the media, publishing industry, entertainment and public services. In order to find out how ordinary Ukrainians perceive the changes brought about by the new language legislation, the Ilko Kucheriv «Democratic Initiatives» Foundation together with Razumkov Centre Sociological Service carried out a nationwide survey. The survey was conducted from 29 July to 4 August 2021, and it covered all Ukraine's regions, except for the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and non-government controlled areas in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts². Data were collected by means of a face-to-face interview at the respondent's place of residence. In total, 2,019 persons aged 18 and over, as well as from different socio-demographic groups, were interviewed. The theoretical sampling error did not exceed 2.3%. The survey was funded as part of the MATRA project by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The main findings of the survey are as follows

About 55%³ of Ukrainian citizens support the requirement (as part of the language legislation) that service sector employees should communicate with customers

1 First published on the «Democratic Initiatives» website on 9 November 2021. Available at <https://dif.org.ua/article/the-day-of-ukrainian-writing-and-language-2021-is-the-use-of-the-state-language-in-the-public-sphere-increasing>

2 *Oblast* (which roughly corresponds to province) is a sub-national entity in Ukraine.

3 The figures (except those in tables) are rounded to the nearest integer.

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in Ukrainian (having the option to communicate in other languages on demand). 21% do not favour this measure, and 18% say that it makes no difference to them.

The majority of those favouring the idea of mandatory communication in Ukrainian in the service sector reside in the West (74%) and Centre (62%). 11% and 14% respectively are against this measure. In the South and East of Ukraine, 33% and 38% of respondents expressed support for this requirement, whereas almost as many (37% and 33%) were against it. In the two latter regions, the proportion of those who do not have a strong opinion on the matter is roughly the same (see Table 1).

Table 1

**The answers given by respondents to the question:
«Do you support (as part of the language legislation) the requirement that
service sector employees should communicate with customers in Ukrainian
(having the option to communicate in other languages on demand)?», %**

Answer options	Region of residence				
	Ukraine as a whole	West	Centre	South	East
Yes	54.9	73.8	61.6	33.3	37.7
No	20.9	11.1	14.1	37.1	32.5
It makes no difference to me	17.6	7.7	19.3	23.3	21.6
No opinion or refusal to answer the question	6.6	7.3	5.1	6.3	8.3

The attitude towards the language legislation does not depend on a respondent's age, at least when the general population is analysed (see Table 2). However, political party affiliation plays a significant role: proponents of mandatory communication in Ukrainian in the service sector mostly lean towards «European Solidarity» (74%), «Servant of the People» (64%) and «Fatherland» (63%). Far fewer supporters of the «Opposition Platform — For Life» camp (29%) are in favour of this requirement (see Table 3).

Table 2

**The answers given by respondents of different age groups to the question
about mandatory communication in Ukrainian in the service sector, %**

Answer options	Age group				
	18–29 years old	30–39 years old	40–49 years old	50–59 years old	60 years old and over
Yes	58.3	56.2	54.1	53.9	53.0
No	18.4	20.0	20.8	22.2	22.6
It makes no difference to me	17.8	18.0	18.2	17.5	17.0
No opinion or refusal to answer the question	5.5	5.9	6.8	6.4	7.5

Table 3

The answers given by respondents to the question about mandatory communication in Ukrainian in the service sector with regard to their party affiliation, %

<i>Answer options</i>	<i>Party affiliation</i>			
	«Servant of the People»	«Opposition Platform — For Life»	«European Solidarity»	«Fatherland»
Yes	63.9	28.8	73.6	63.0
No	15.9	46.0	13.9	15.8
It makes no difference to me	14.5	19.1	9.3	17.0
No opinion or refusal to answer the question	5.8	6.0	3.2	4.2

What plays a crucial role in determining a respondent's attitude to the new language legislation is the language perceived by them as native: whilst 63% of those regarding Ukrainian as their native language display a positive attitude towards mandatory communication in Ukrainian in the service sector, among Russian speaking respondents support for this measure stands at only 26% (see Table 4). Further, the respondent's native language has turned out to be more important than the region of residence. Almost half of those living in the South and East but regarding Ukrainian as their native language support the above-mentioned language requirement, and nearly as many Russian speakers oppose this measure — despite residing in the West and Centre, i.e. the regions where the majority of people speak Ukrainian (see Table 5).

Table 4

The answers given by respondents to the question about mandatory communication in Ukrainian in the service sector with regard to their native language, %

<i>Answer options</i>	<i>Native language</i>	
	Ukrainian	Russian
Yes	62.6	26.4
No	15.7	43.8
It makes no difference to me	15.9	21.5
No opinion or refusal to answer the question	5.7	8.3

Almost two thirds of those surveyed are sure that the use of Ukrainian in the service sector has increased: 25% of them chose the option «slightly» and 33% ticked «significantly». Yet, 31% of respondents did not notice any change in this respect.

An increase in the use of Ukrainian in the service sector was reported in all regions of this country, but especially in the East: 20% and 44% of those interviewed reported a slight and a significant increase respectively. However, 41% of those residing in the South hold the view that no change has taken place (see Table 6).

Table 5

The answers given by respondents to the question about mandatory communication in Ukrainian in the service sector with regard to their native language and the region of residence, %

Answer options	Region of residence			
	West–Centre		South–East	
	Native language			
	Ukrainian	Russian	Ukrainian	Russian
Yes	69.1	36.5	46.3	23.6
No	10.7	41.2	28.5	44.3
It makes no difference to me	14.3	17.6	20.2	22.5
No opinion or refusal to answer the question	5.9	4.7	4.9	9.6

Table 6

The answers given by respondents to the question: «Which change in the use of Ukrainian in the service sector have you noticed over the past six months?», %

Answer options	Region of residence				
	Ukraine as a whole	West	Centre	South	East
The use of Ukrainian has significantly decreased	0.8	2.1	0.4	0.4	0.4
The use of Ukrainian has slightly decreased	2.1	5.2	1.8	0.4	0.8
The use of Ukrainian has slightly increased	25.4	23.0	31.9	21.6	19.9
The use of Ukrainian has significantly increased	33.2	25.1	31.0	31.5	44.2
There has been no noticeable change in the use of Ukrainian	31.3	37.6	30.3	40.7	22.9
No opinion or refusal to answer the question	7.2	7.1	4.5	5.4	11.8

As far as interpersonal communication is concerned, 14% of respondents say that they always switch from their native language to that of their interlocutor. 41% do that depending on the situation, and another 41% continue speaking their native language (see Table 7). In addition, those whose native language is Russian are less likely to switch to the language of their conversation partner (see Table 8).

People usually speak in everyday life the language they regard as native. Nevertheless, there can be exceptions. In Ukraine, for example, a person may think of Ukrainian as their native language but tends to communicate in Russian. Therefore, it makes sense to find out the relationship between a respondent's native language and the language they use in daily life.

Table 7

The answers given by respondents to the question: «Do you switch from the language you usually speak to that of your interlocutor?», %

Answer options	Region of residence				
	Ukraine as a whole	West	Centre	South	East
Yes, I do	13.9	6.3	18.1	11.6	15.6
Yes, in some cases	41.1	33.1	51.5	25.7	40.4
No, I never do	40.6	56.7	26.5	56.0	39.7
No opinion or refusal to answer the question	4.4	4.0	3.9	6.6	4.3

Table 8

The answers given by respondents to the question: «Do you switch from the language you usually speak to that of your conversation partner?» with regard to their native language, %

Answer options	Native language	
	Ukrainian	Russian
Yes, I do	14.6	10.7
Yes, in some cases	42.9	33.3
No, I never do	38.1	51.2
No opinion or refusal to answer the question	4.4	4.7

Table 9 shows that 77% of those considering Ukrainian to be their native language use Ukrainian in everyday communication as well. However, among those considering Russian to be their native language and speaking Russian in daily life this figure reaches 95%.

Table 9

The relationship between a respondent's native language and the language in which he/she communicates in everyday life^a

Answer options	Native language	
	Ukrainian	Russian
Communicate in Ukrainian, %	76.9	2.8
Communicate in Russian, %	20.0	94.8

^a The percentages do not add up to 100 because of lack of the data for those whose native language is other than Ukrainian or Russian and those who did not give a definite answer.

According to the data, a fifth of those interviewed speak in everyday life the language they do not regard as native. Probably, they think of the Ukrainian language as an attribute of Ukrainian national identity but continue to speak Russian by habit. This tendency is more obvious in the South and East, where nearly half (47%) of the respondents who consider Ukrainian to be their native language said that they used Russian in everyday communication. In contrast, speaking Ukrainian in daily life is customary for residents of the West and Centre (see Table 10).

Table 10

The relationship between a respondent's native language and the language in which he/she communicates in everyday life with regard to the region of residence

<i>Answer options</i>	<i>Region of residence</i>			
	<i>West–Centre</i>		<i>South–East</i>	
	<i>Native language</i>			
	<i>Ukrainian</i>	<i>Russian</i>	<i>Ukrainian</i>	<i>Russian</i>
Communicate in Ukrainian, %	89.5	9.6	44.5	0.7
Communicate in Russian, %	9.4	86.7	47.0	97.1

Almost four fifths of Ukrainian citizens regard Ukrainian as their native language. Besides, the West has the highest proportion of those saying that Ukrainian is their native language (97%), followed by the Centre (88%). The corresponding figures for the South and East are markedly lower, amounting to 56% and 59% respectively (see Table 11).

Table 11

**The answers given by respondents to the question:
«Which language do you consider to be your native?», %**

<i>Answer options</i>	<i>Region of residence</i>				
	<i>Ukraine as a whole</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>Centre</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>East</i>
Ukrainian	78.3	96.7	87.8	55.6	58.5
Russian	18.0	1.7	9.8	40.7	34.2
Other	1.1	0.4	0.3	1.7	2.6
No opinion or refusal to answer the question	2.6	1.3	2.2	2.1	4.7

Whether a respondent perceives Ukrainian or Russian as their native language depends, to a certain extent, on how old they are. For instance, 83% of those aged between 18 and 29 chose the option «Ukrainian is my native language», compared to 74% among respondents over 60 (see Table 12). This pattern also holds true for the South and East, where, as mentioned above, less than two thirds of the population consider Ukrainian to be their native language (see Table 13).

Table 12

**The answers given by respondents of different age groups to the question:
«Which language do you consider to be your native?», %**

<i>Answer options</i>	<i>Age group</i>				
	<i>18–29 years old</i>	<i>30–39 years old</i>	<i>40–49 years old</i>	<i>50–59 years old</i>	<i>60 years old and over</i>
Ukrainian	83.3	78.1	80.7	79.3	73.6
Russian	13.5	17.2	15.9	18.7	22.0
Other	0.3	1.5	1.1	0.6	1.6
No opinion or refusal to answer the question	2.9	3.2	2.3	1.5	2.8

Table 13

The answers given by respondents belonging to different age groups and living in the South and East of Ukraine to the question: «Which language do you consider to be your native?», %

<i>Answer options</i>	18–29 years old	30–39 years old	40–49 years old	50–59 years old	60 years old and over
Ukrainian	63.6	60.0	57.3	57.9	53.1
Russian	30.5	33.3	36.6	37.6	40.2
Other	0.8	3.0	2.3	1.5	3.1
No opinion or refusal to answer the question	5.1	3.6	3.8	3.0	3.6

Community type (city, town or village) also plays a part in a person's language choice. Those living in small towns and rural areas much more often consider Ukrainian to be their native language than large city residents (see Table 14). This pattern remains true for the South and East although the corresponding figures are lower. Further, respondents from these two regions who live in cities with a population of over 1 million are more likely to gravitate towards Russian (see Table 15).

Table 14

The answers given by respondents to the question: «Which language do you consider to be your native?» with regard to the community type, %

<i>Answer options</i>	<i>Community type</i>			
	Cities having a population of over 1 million	Cities having a population of 100 to 999 thousand	Towns having a population of under 99 thousand	Small towns and villages
Ukrainian	54.5	76.2	81.6	87.9
Russian	39.5	19.7	14.6	9.8
Other	1.1	2.4	0.5	0.8
No opinion or refusal to answer the question	4.8	1.7	3.3	1.4

It is reasonable to assume that young people residing in large cities in the South and East of Ukraine (i.e. cities with a population of over 1 million) will opt for Ukrainian as a native language. Nonetheless, additional research with a larger sample (more than 2,000 respondents) is needed in order to assess the plausibility of this hypothesis. Such a survey should have four variables: a respondent's age, native language, region of residence and community type.

The answers given by residents of the South and East of Ukraine to the question:
 «Which language do you consider to be your native?»
 with regard to the community type, %

Answer options	Community type			
	Cities having a population of over 1 million	Cities having a population of 100 to 999 thousand	Towns having a population of under 99 thousand	Small towns and villages
Ukrainian	35.9	57.3	58.0	73.9
Russian	54.5	37.4	34.3	22.6
Other	2.0	5.3	1.4	1.5
No opinion or refusal to answer the question	7.6	–	6.3	1.9

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СЕРГІЙ ШАПОВАЛОВ

День української писемності та мови — 2021: чи стає державної мови більше в публічному просторі?

Щороку 9 листопада в Україні відзначають День української писемності та мови. До цієї знаменної дати Фонд «Демократичні ініціативи імені Ілька Кучеріва» підготував прес-реліз за результатами опитування щодо ставлення громадян до вживання української мови як державної в різних сферах суспільного життя, зокрема в секторі послуг. В опитуванні, яке проводилося з 29 липня до 4 серпня 2021 року, взяло участь 2019 осіб старше 18 років з усіх регіонів України, за винятком Автономної Республіки Крим та тимчасово окупованих територій у Донецькій і Луганській областях. Респонденти мали відповісти на такі питання: а) чи підтримують вони норму мовного закону стосовно обов'язкового обслуговування українською мовою за збереження можливості обслуговування клієнтів іншими мовами на їхнє прохання; б) які зміни вони (опитувані) помітили за останні півроку стосовно частоти вживання української мови в сфері обслуговування й торгівлі; в) чи переходять вони з рідної на іншу мову спілкування, яку теж знають, якщо співрозмовник звертається до них цією мовою; г) яку мову вони вважають рідною. Згідно з даними опитування, істотну роль у підтримці вищезазначеної норми мовного закону відіграють: регіон проживання й рідна мова респондента/респондентки, а також їхні політичні вподобання. Варто зауважити, що мова, яку респондент/респондентка вважають своєю рідною, виявилася більш значущим чинником, ніж регіон проживання.

Ключові слова: державна мова, мовне законодавство, сфера обслуговування, рідна мова, мова повсякденного спілкування, політичні вподобання, регіони України

СЕРГЕЙ ШАПОВАЛОВ

День украинской письменности и языка — 2021: становится ли государственного языка больше в публичном пространстве?

Ежегодно 9 ноября в Украине отмечают День украинской письменности и языка. К этой знаменательной дате Фонд «Демократические инициативы имени Илька Кучерива» подготовил пресс-релиз по результатам опроса касательно отношения граждан к употреблению украинского языка как государственного в различных сферах общественной жизни, в частности, в секторе услуг. В опросе, который проводился с 29 июля по 4 августа 2021 года, приняло участие 2019 респондентов старше 18 лет из всех регионов Украины, за исключением Автономной Республики Крым и временно оккупированных территорий в Донецкой и Луганской областях. Респонденты должны были ответить на следующие вопросы: а) поддерживают ли они норму языкового закона относительно обязательного обслуживания на украинском при сохранении возможности обслуживания клиентов на других языках по их просьбе; б) какие изменения они (опрошенные) заметили за последние полгода относительно частоты употребления украинского языка в сфере обслуживания и торговли; в) переходят ли они с родного на другой язык общения, которым тоже владеют, если собеседник обращается к ним на этом языке; г) какой язык они считают родным. Согласно данным опроса, существенную роль в поддержке вышеуказанной нормы языкового закона играют: регион проживания и родной язык респондента/респондентки, а также их политические предпочтения. Стоит отметить, что язык, который респондент/респондентка считают своим родным, оказался более значимым фактором, чем регион проживания.

Ключевые слова: государственный язык, языковое законодательство, сфера обслуживания, родной язык, язык повседневного общения, политические предпочтения, регионы Украины

SERHII SHAPOVALOV

The Day of Ukrainian Writing and Language — 2021: Is the use of Ukrainian as an official language in the public sphere increasing?

The Day of Ukrainian Writing and Language is celebrated in this country every 9 November. On this occasion, the Ilko Kucheriv «Democratic Initiatives» Foundation published a press release that included findings from a survey on the attitudes of Ukrainian citizens towards the use of Ukrainian as an official language in various spheres such as service industry. The survey was carried out from 29 July to 4 August 2021, and it covered all Ukraine's regions, except for the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and non-government controlled areas in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. In total, 2,019 people aged 18 and over were interviewed. Respondents were supposed to answer the following questions: a) whether they support (as part of the language legislation) the requirement that service sector employees should communicate with customers in Ukrainian (having the option to communicate in other languages on demand); b) what changes in the use of Ukrainian in the service sector they have noticed over the past six months; c) whether they switch from their native language to the language of their conversation partner; d) what language they consider to be their native. According to the data, a respondent's native language and region of residence, as well as his/her political preferences, determine their attitude towards the requirement described above. It is worth pointing out that the respondent's native language has proved to be more important than the region of residence.

Keywords: official language, language legislation, service sector, native language, language of everyday communication, political preferences, regions of Ukraine