

Country Brief

Ukraine

Electoral autocracy

COUNTRY INDICATORS

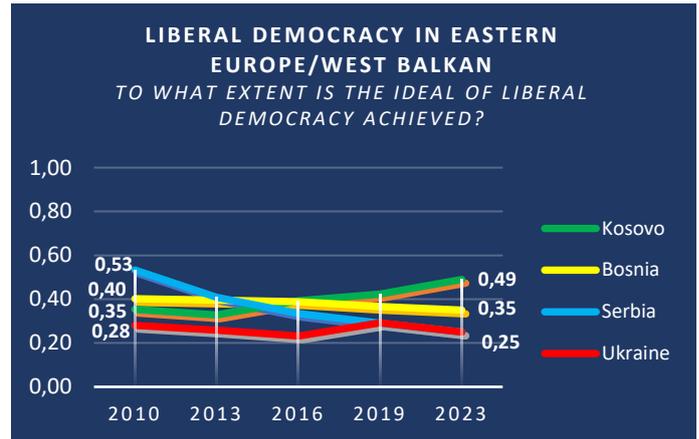
Population: 43.815 million (WB)
Urban population: 70% (WB)
Urban population growth (annual): -0.5% (WB)
Access to water: 94% (WHO-UNICEF)
Access to electricity: 100% (WB)
Mortality rate, under-5 (per 1,000 births): 8 (WB)
GDP (current US\$): 200.086 billion (WB)
GDP per capita, PPP (current Int\$): 14,220 (WB)
Presence of Violence: Full-scale Russian Invasion (2022) (UCDP)
Global Freedom Status: Partly free, score 61 (FH)
Corruption Perception Index: score 32, rank 122/180 (TI)
Human Development Index: High (0.773), rank 77/191 (UNDP)
Local Government Association: Association of Small Towns of Ukraine (ASTU) + [All-Ukrainian Association of Local Government Bodies \(VAG\)](#)

Decentralisation

Ukraine is a unitary state. The main general structure, fundamental rights, state organisation, territorial structure and provisions governing the exercise of power at the level of the territorial units were defined in the 1996 Constitution. Ukraine has a long history of decentralisation reform, which has progressed in fits and starts since independence in 1991. Several draft laws have been adopted in 2003-2004 and again 2008-2009 strengthening local self-government but were finally rejected. Increased decentralisation with more powers and resources for local governments was, however, one of the key demands of Euromaidan and the Revolution of Dignity. This is part of the reason why local government reform became a top priority of the government's agenda (SNG-WOFI Ukraine, 2019).

Ukraine has a complex three-tier system of local governments composed of regions (*oblast*), which are divided into urban and rural districts (*rayon*), which, in turn, are divided in villages, towns and settlements – each with their local governing bodies (*bromadas*) (see Figure 2). At the regional and district levels, locally-elected authorities co-exist alongside local state administrations. On the other hand, leaders and councils at the municipal level are directly elected. There are no hierarchical or formal relations between self-government bodies in Ukraine, in contrast with the strictly hierarchical local state administration. However, in practice, lower-tier councils have traditionally been dependent on their *rayon* and *oblast* administration (SNG-WOFI Ukraine, 2019)

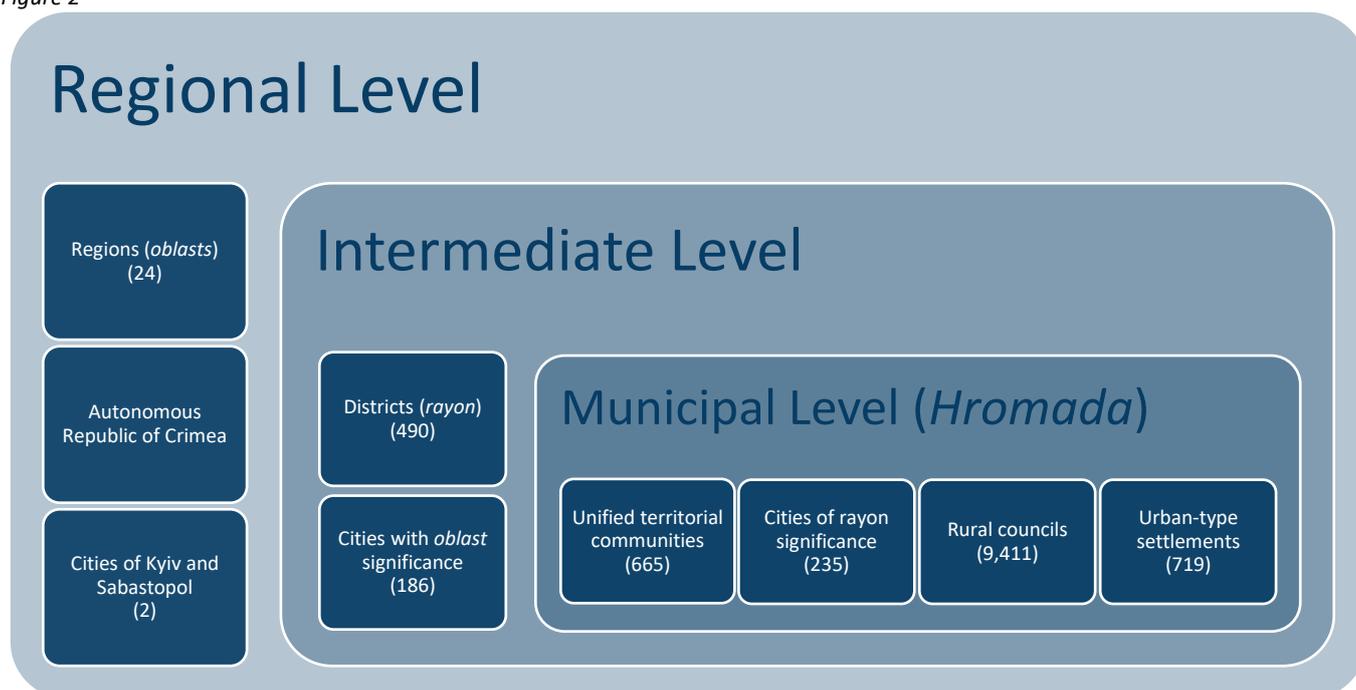
Figure 1



Source: V-Dem Institute (2024)

Clarification: The liberal principle of democracy emphasizes the importance of protecting individual and minority rights against the tyranny of the state and the tyranny of the majority. The liberal model takes a 'negative' view of political power insofar as it judges the quality of democracy by the limits placed on government. This is achieved by constitutionally protected civil liberties, strong rule of law, an independent judiciary, and effective checks and balances that, together, limit the exercise of executive power. To make this a measure of liberal democracy, the index also takes the level of electoral democracy into account.

Figure 2



Source: SNG-WOFI Ukraine (2019)

Local Autonomy

Mandates

Ukrainian local government responsibilities are described in the Constitution. A distinction is made between delegated competences (education, health, and social welfare) and exclusive competences. The central government is formally responsible for delegated functions and provides subordinate governments with targeted funds to carry out these tasks. Local governments have more autonomy in the management of exclusive functions (e.g. utilities, planning, housing, communal services, culture, etc.) but they are defined quite vaguely. Ukraine's territorial structure is asymmetrical, with competences allocated differently for the same levels of local government, and the distribution of competences across levels of government is complex and unclear.

Table 1

Main Sectors	Local Government Responsibilities
1.General public services	Internal administration; Licensing and registration; Management of municipal properties and enterprises
2.Public order and safety	
3.Economic affairs/transports	Construction and maintenance of local roads; Local transportation; Ensuring integrated social/economic and cultural development of the territory of the community
4.Environmental protection	Waste collection; Sanitation
5.Housing and community amenities	Planning; Local programmes for development of housing; Municipal utilities; Heating; Water management
6.Health	Outpatient clinics; Polyclinics; Hospitals; Maternity centres; Primary medical care centres; First and emergency aid stations
7.Recreation, culture & religion	Local libraries; Museums; Exhibitions; Theatres; Clubs; Philharmonics; Zoos;

	Sport schools for children and youth; Sport centres and facilities
8.Education	Preschool, general primary and secondary education, including specialised educational institutions; Extracurricular activities
9.Social protection	Support of children and low-income individuals

Source: SNG-WOFI Ukraine (2019)

Local Government Finances

In Ukraine, the subnational financing structure remains quite centralised, as a large share of subnational expenditure is executed on behalf of the central government. But the changes to the State Budget Code realised in 2016 marked a trend toward further fiscal decentralisation with the aim to facilitate local revenue mobilisation and budget negotiations. Recent reforms have allowed local councils to levy local taxes and fees, with the aim to increase own-revenue and rely less on transfers. It is worth noting the growing fiscal importance of the Unified Territorial Communities (UTCs), which have their proper independent budget, and direct fiscal relations with the central government (SNG-WOFI Ukraine, 2017).

Local Democracy

State of Elections

The local and parliamentary/presidential elections are held on different years. For the 2020 local elections in Ukraine, citizens cast ballots to elect councilors for all three spheres of local government (*oblasts*, districts, and *bromadas*) as well as council executives (mayors). However, while being conducted with higher standards than usual (see Appendix 2) turnout was at an all-time low (see Table 3). The next local election is set for 2025.

With Ukraine currently at war with Russia the future trajectory of democracy is uncertain. V-Dem (2024) notes that Russia's illegal invasion "has put one-third of the territory under harsh authoritarian rule and forced Ukraine's government to impose state of emergency and restrict media freedom and related aspects." Before the Russian invasion, however, Ukraine was one of few countries in the world where democracy was heading in a positive direction. V-Dem's Liberal Democracy Index (see Figure 1) shows steady progress following the 2014 Maidan revolution and subsequent ousting of Viktor Yanukovich, albeit from very low levels of democracy. The same trend is seen clearly in the Clean Elections Index (see Appendix 2), which shows a significant improvement in the conduct of elections from 2010 and 2015 to 2020.

Electoral Outcomes

Table 3

Local Elections	2010	2015	2020
Voter turnout	-	46,5%	35,95%
Female Councillors	-	-	-
Female Mayors	-	-	-

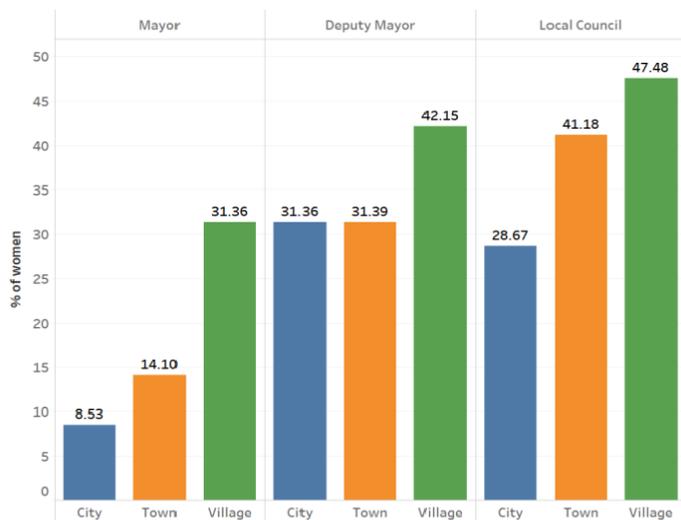
Source: Ukrainian Civil Network (OPORA)

Women's representation

In Ukraine, candidate lists are required to include two women for every five candidates. The women political representation in local government is mixed, but it is generally higher the closer the local government is to the communities. For local councils, the proportion of females elected to political office ranges from 28,7% at the

city level to 47,5% at the village level (see Figure 3). For local government executives (i.e. mayors) the female representation is 30,4% at the village level but only 8,5% at the city level.

Figure 3



Source: FROGEE POLICY BRIEF 3, *Insights from Ukraine*, March, 2021

References

- FH. (2022). *Global Freedom Status*. Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org/explore-the-map?type=fotn&year=2022> (Accessed October 24, 2022)
- SNG-WOFI Ukraine. (2019). *Country Profile: Ukraine*. World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment. <https://www.sng-wofi.org/country-profiles/> (Accessed June 17, 2022)
- TI. (2021). *Corruption Perceptions Index*. Transparency International. <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021> (Accessed October 24, 2022)
- UCDP. (2022). *Conflict Encyclopedia*. Uppsala Conflict Data Program. <https://ucdp.uu.se/encyclopedia> (Accessed June 17, 2022)
- UNDP. (2021). *Human Development Index (HDI)*. United Nations Development Programme. <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI> (Accessed October 24, 2022)
- UN Women. (2021). *Women's Representation in Local Government: A Global Analysis. Working Paper*. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/01/womens-representation-in-local-government> (Accessed June 28, 2022)
- V-Dem Institute. (2022). Nazifa Alizada, Vanessa A. Boese, Martin Lundstedt, Kelly Morrison, Natalia Natsika, Yuko Sato, Hugo Tai, and Staffan I. Lindberg. *Democracy Report 2022: Autocratization Changing Nature?* Varieties of Democracy Institute. https://v-dem.net/media/publications/dr_2022.pdf (Accessed June 28, 2022).
- V-Dem Institute. (2024). Marina Nord, Martin Lundstedt, David Altman, Fabio Angiolillo, Cecilia Borella, Tiago Fernandes, Lisa Gastaldi, Ana Good God, Natalia Natsika, and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2024. *Democracy Report 2024: Democracy Winning and Losing at the Ballot*. Varieties of Democracy Institute. <https://v-dem.net/publications/democracy-reports/> (Accessed April 19, 2024)
- V-Dem. (2024). *Datasets*. <https://v-dem.net/data/> [Accessed 2024-04-19].
- WB. (2022). *World Development Indicators*. The World Bank Group. <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators/> (Accessed October 24, 2022)
- WHO-UNICEF (2021). *Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene*. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/water-and-sanitation/drinking-water/> (Accessed October 24, 2022)

About ICLD

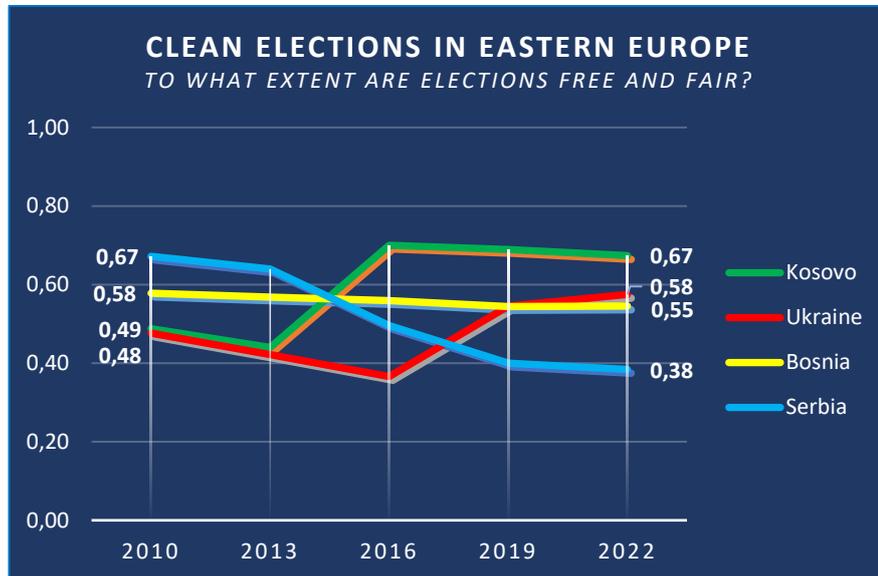
The Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD) is part of the Swedish development cooperation. The mandate of the organisation is to contribute to poverty alleviation by strengthening local governments. This Country Brief is part of a publication series that investigates the state of decentralisation and local democracy in countries where ICLD programmes operate.

This Country Brief covers events up to March 2024.

Appendix 1: Clean Elections Index

Research Question: To what extent are elections free and fair? (Low to High; 0-1)

Clarification: Free and fair connotes an absence of registration fraud, systematic irregularities, government intimidation of the opposition, vote buying, and election violence.



Source: V-Dem Institute (2024)

Appendix 2: Corruption Perceptions Index

Clarification: CPI measures how corrupt each country's public sector is perceived to be, according to experts and businesspeople.

