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## **RIGHT ELECTORAL PREFERENCES OF THE POPULATION OF THE WESTERN REGION OF UKRAINE PREFERENCJE WYBORCZE LUDNOŚCI REGIONU ZACHODNIEGO UKRAINY**

**Abstract:** The article describes the features of modern righteous voting preferences of the population of the western region of Ukraine. An analysis of the electoral orientation of the region's population during the regular and extraordinary parliamentary and presidential elections in 2010–2015 is carried out. Regional discontinuities in voting preferences were identified and local constituencies of right-wing candidates were located. Real dynamic changes in the electoral preferences of the region's population are taken into account.

**Key words:** electoral preferences, left and right political forces

**Słowa kluczowe:** preferencje wyborcze, lewa i prawa siła polityczna

### **Problem statement**

The democratization of Ukrainian society requires an active political position of every citizen of the state and their personal responsibility for the life of the country. The implementation of this is impossible without the electoral activity of the population, which is most fully manifested through the active (passive) potential voter participation in the electoral process. The issue of participation in the elections

actualizes fundamental research, including human geographical one, research into involvement in the electoral process of subjects of electoral activity (individuals, social groups and layers; cultural-professional, ethno-national, confessional and politically united communities) through the prism of quantitative (primarily through attendance figures) and qualitative (the study of ideological orientations and preferences) party of election activities.

### **Analysis of recent research and publications**

These studies are interdisciplinary. Some work on electoral preferences has electoral geography, political science and sociology.

However, these studies do not always consider a geospatial dimension that allows detecting all patterns of implementation of citizens' electoral activity. At the same time, the distinctive features of electoral activity in the vast region have not been researched so far, as well as its dependence on geographical factors and territorial differentiation of preferences from place to place. Real dynamic changes in the political situation in Ukraine in recent years have not been taken into account either.

### **Task statement**

Therefore, for the purpose of this study we propose to consider the study of spatial distribution of electoral preferences of the population of the Western region of Ukraine.

### **Study material interpretation**

Current electoral preferences of the population of Western region of Ukraine (hereinafter – WRU) were shaped after Ukraine gained its state independence and maintained state position. The region is a traditional electoral base of right-wing national-democratic forces. However, political preferences in the region are not limited to classical coordinates «left-right», since the significant role is played by the peculiarities of the region and its focus on the East or West, and behind it there are vectors to Europe and Russia [Shveda 2010].

Electoral preferences of the residents of the region will be researched with the help of a traditional scheme of political opposition: right (right, far-right, center-right and centrist national-democratic keeping to pro-European foreign policy) and left (pro-Russian) forces [Berezinskiy 2004].

Western Ukrainian border territory without any exaggeration can be considered a bulwark of national and state right-wing political forces. The results of a referendum on the Act of Independence of Ukraine and the first presidential elections of December 1, 1991 are the first manifestations of patriotic positions. Further regular and snap parliamentary and presidential elections confirmed the traditional electoral orientation of the region [Myrosh M. 2017].

In the 2010 presidential election in Ukraine, 18 candidates were registered, of whom six represented right and center-right political forces. In total, they won by an overwhelming majority – 71,2% [Khan 1999]. Y.V. Tymoshenko received the largest number of votes (37,98%), which is 15% more than in the country as a whole (Fig. 1). And in the run-off, voting for this candidate was almost unanimous (81,16%). Tymoshenko's support is localized in the northern region (in Volyn oblast the highest level of electoral preferences was recorded) (Fig. 2). Halychyna region was distinguished by a moderate support for a candidate and only the run-off of February 7, 2010 demonstrated unanimity and trust. Zakarpattia oblast turned out to be the only area where the candidate lost the vote and the representative of the «left» political parties got the upper hand, and only in the run-off she won an edge in the election (Fig. 2.) [Myrosh M. 2017].

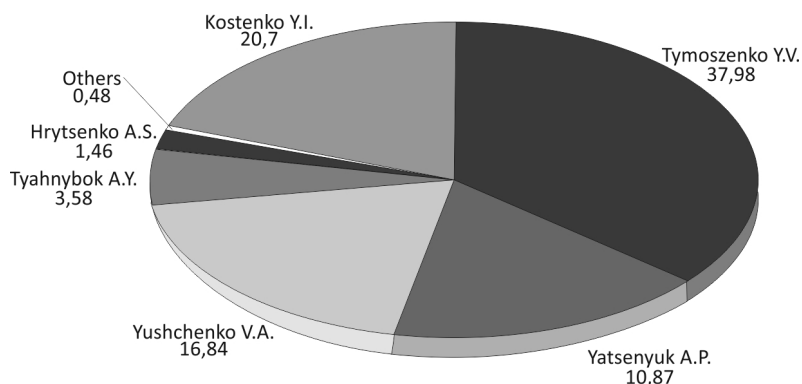
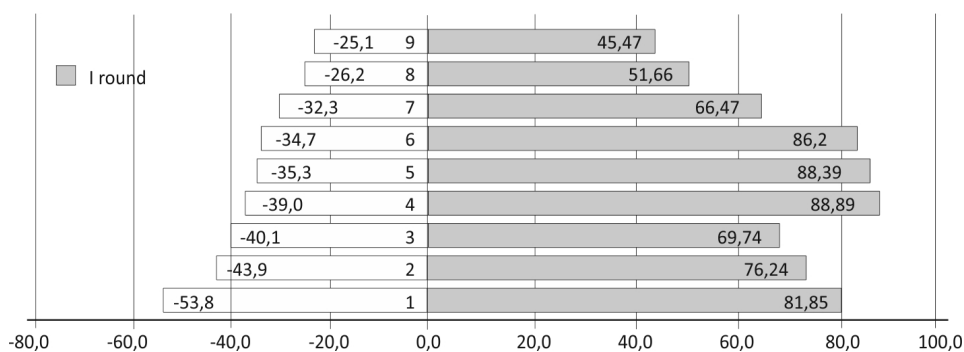
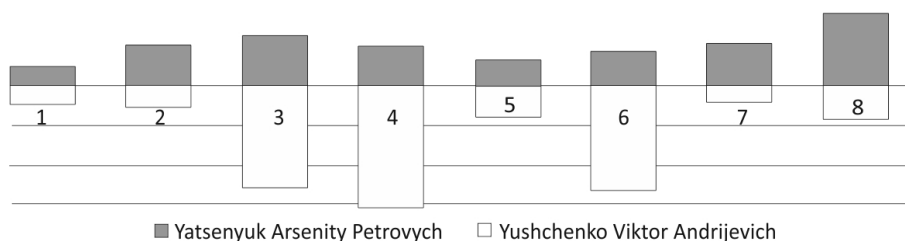


Fig. 1. Number of voters for the «right» candidates in the WRU, January 17, 2010 (1st round), %  
 Ryc. 1. Liczba wyborców na „właściwych” kandydatów na WRU, 17 stycznia 2010 (I tura), %  
 Source: own study.



Note: 1 – Volyn oblast, 2 – Rivne oblast, 3 – Khmelnytskyi oblast, 4 – Ivano-Frankivsk oblast, 5 – Ternopil oblast, 6 – Lviv oblast, 7 – Chernivtsi oblast, 8 – Zakarpattia oblast, 9 – Ukraine.  
 Fig. 2. Electoral support of Yulia Tymoshenko, %  
 Ryc. 2. Poparcie wyborcze Julii Tymoszenko, %  
 Source: own study.

Other right-wing candidates are V. Yushchenko (16,8% of the vote in WRU) and A. Yatseniuk (10,9%) (Fig. 1). While the former secured the support in Lviv, Ternopil and Ivano-Frankivsk oblasts, the latter received a large proportion of votes in his native Chernivtsi oblast as well as in Zakarpattia and Khmelnytskyi oblasts, where Yushchenko failed. A low level of support of both candidates was observed in Polissia area where Tymoshenko was leading (Fig. 3) [Myrosh M. 2017].



Note: 1 – Volyn oblast, 2 – Zakarpattia oblast, 3 – Ivano-Frankivsk oblast, 4 – Lviv oblast, 5 – Rivne oblast, 6 – Ternopil oblast, 7 – Khmelnytskyi oblast, 8 – Chernivtsi oblast

Fig. 3. Electoral preferences of WRU voters, %

Ryc. 3. Preferencje wyborcze wyborców WRU, %

Source: own study.

A characteristic feature of the election was the emergence and growth of support for extreme right candidate O. Tiahnybok, which indicates the radicalization and nationalization of electoral preferences of the inhabitants of the region (Fig. 1) [Myrosh M. 2017].

The results of 2012 parliamentary elections confirmed the high level of right national-democratic electoral preferences. The total amount of votes cast for right-wing parties was 79,9%. However, in Zakarpattia oblast left-wing parties took an upper hand [Bligh 2004].

The segment of voters who supported the «Yulia Tymoshenko Coalition» (YTC) was clearly distinguished, constituting more than 35% of the population. Electoral support for YTC was concentrated in Chernivtsi (the second result in the country), Volyn, Lviv and Ternopil oblasts. Yatsenyuk team won in six out of eight oblasts of the region. However, in two oblasts YTC failed to keep leading positions: in Lviv oblast, an all-Ukrainian alliance «Svoboda», which positioned itself as extreme right, nationalist-radical party, came first, whereas in Zakarpattia oblast public preferences shifted toward the left-wing political forces (Fig. 4).

The result of «Svoboda» is a victory in Lviv oblast, the second place in Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil and Volyn oblasts, and the third one in Rivne oblast. More than 40% of the votes the party won in Drohobych and two urban districts of the Lviv city. This result was 1% lower than their previous result in districts with centers in Ivano-Frankivsk, Stryi (Lviv oblast) and Chortkiv (Ternopil oblast). The majority of votes outside Halychyna – almost 20% – the party gained in the district in the centre of Khmelnytskyi. In Bukovyna and Zakarpattia, «Svoboda» received less than 10% votes (Fig. 4). Thus, local concentration of the electorate of «Svoboda» is quite evident.

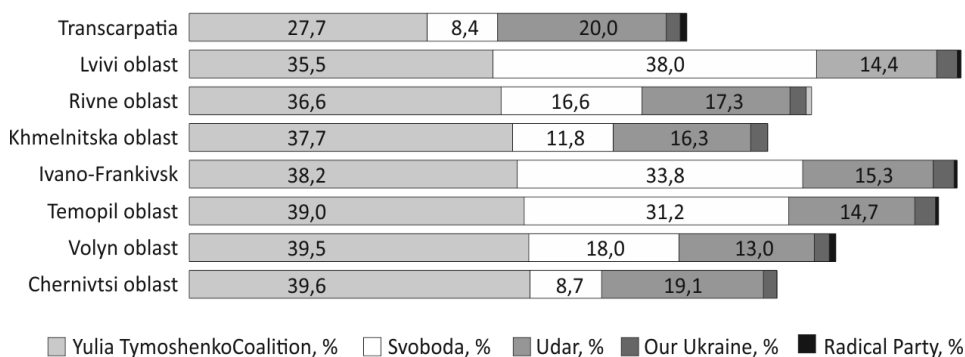


Fig. 4. Geography of electoral support of «right» political forces, %  
 Ryc. 4. Geografia poparcia wyborczego „prawicowych” sił politycznych, %  
 Source: own study.

The party «Udar» also entered the Parliament by receiving more than 16% of the votes in the region, with the second result in Rivne oblast and the third place in other oblasts (Fig. 4). The best results of «Udar» were shown in Rivne, Zakarpattia oblast and Bukovyna – more than 19% of the population. The party managed to become a winner only in Hust (over 30% of votes, Zakarpattia oblast) [Bligh 2004].

The position of «Our Ukraine» and the Radical Party by O. Liashko were rather weak, but while «Our Ukraine» was at the final stage of its great public policy, the Radical Party was just beginning to work and a certain level of commitment to the party’s messages indicates that west voters were looking out for the new political face alternative to «traditional» forces (Fig. 4).

Early presidential elections in Ukraine of May 25, 2014 took place in a permanent emergency situation. The achievements of the Revolution of Dignity of 2013–2014 led to the destruction of the presidential vertical and transformed the party system, while the annexation of the Crimea, military events in Donbass, the constant threat of open Russian invasion resulted in high mobilization of patriotic voters and peculiar political preferences [Myrosh M. 2017].

In this election, the traditional right as well as center-right and far-right forces were represented by at least 6 candidates that received a record amount of electoral support, i.e. 93,1% of the vote (Fig. 5).

It is in this region that the current President P. Poroshenko became the overall winner with 61,63% support and the first place (more than 50%) in all oblasts and districts of the region. The best results were achieved in Lviv oblast (69.92%), where the candidate received the support from more than 1 million voters (Fig. 5, 6). In Pustomyty district, more than three quarters of voters cast their votes for Poroshenko.

Y. Tymoshenko received the second national result within WRU (Chernivtsi oblast), while the regional average support ranged from 15% (in Ukraine – 12,8%). The largest support of the candidate was observed in Volyn and Khmelnytskyi oblasts. However, the symbolic threshold of 20% was not crossed by Yulia Tymoshenko in either any ATU or district of the region (neither was in Ukraine) (Fig. 5, 6). Less than

one and a half percent was lacking in Bukovyna. It should be noted that in the districts of the oblast centers, the voters voted for the former head of the government significantly less than in the «provincial» districts.

High rates were received by O. Liashko (>10%), especially in Volyn and Rivne oblasts. The candidate got more than 10% of support in Bukovyna, Khmelnytskyi and Ternopil oblasts.

A. Hrytsenko was the «fourth» in all ATU of the region, gaining almost 5,3%. The best results of the candidate were obtained in Lviv and Ternopil oblasts: more than 10% of voters in Ternopil and the third result in four districts of the region (one in Ternopil and three in Lviv). Zakarpattia oblast and Bukovyna were the most unfortunate for the politician (for example, in Novoselytsia at Bukovyna his result was less than 2%).

O. Tiahnybok's results were also higher in the region than on the all-national level (over 1,5%). The best result of the leader of «Svoboda» was not in his native Lviv, but in Volyn oblast, followed by Ivano-Frankivsk oblast (Fig. 5, 6).

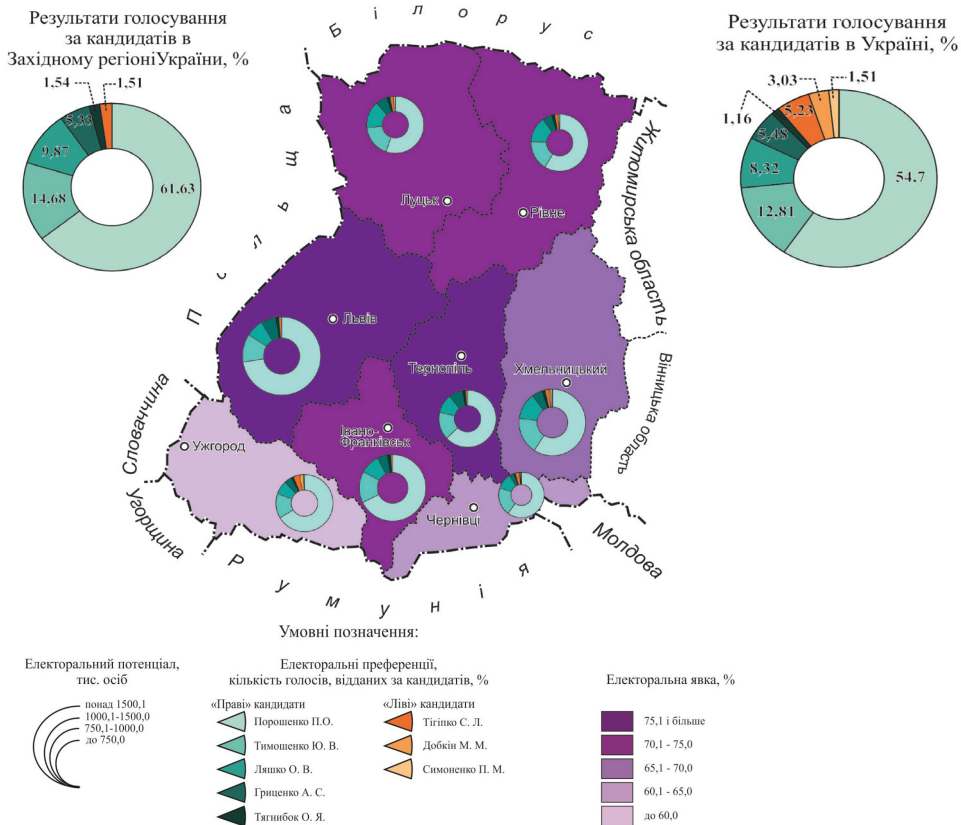


Fig. 5. The electoral activity of the WRU population in the presidential selection of May 25, 2014  
 Ryc. 5. Aktywność wyborcza ludności WRU w okresie wyborów prezydenckich z 25 maja 2014 r.  
 Source: own study.

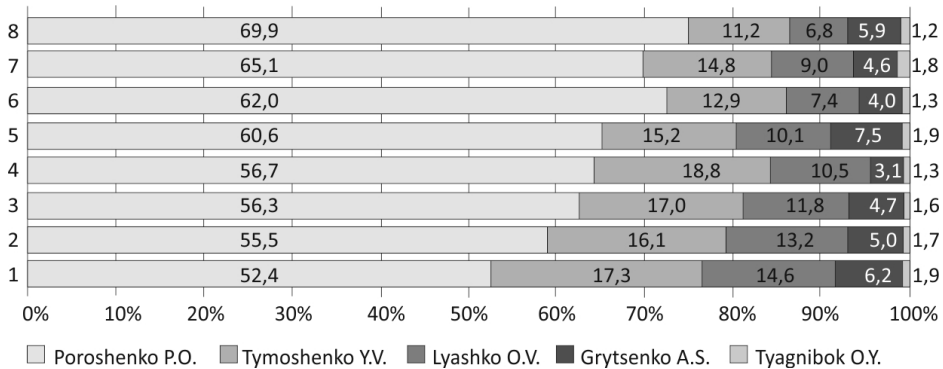


Fig. 6. Electoral support of «right» political forces, %, 2014

Note: 1 – Volyn oblast, 2 – Rivne oblast, 3 – Khmelnytskyi oblast, 4 – Chernivtsi oblast, 5 – Ternopil oblast, 6 – Zakarpattia oblast, 7 – Ivano-Frankivsk oblast, 8 – Lviv oblast

Source: own study.

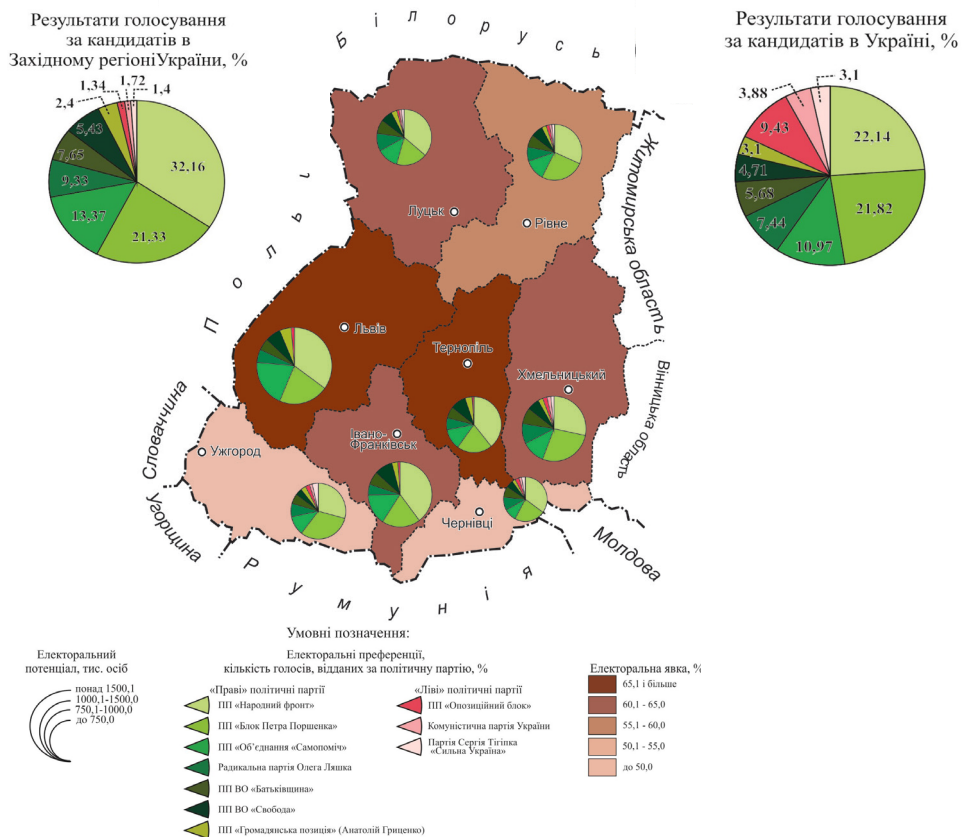


Fig. 7. The electoral activity of the WRU population in parliamentary elections of October 26, 2014

Рис. 7. Активність виборча люду WRU в парламентських виборках 26 жовтня 2014 р.

Source: own study.

Electoral population choice in parliamentary elections of October 2014 was formed under the influence of military operations in the anti-terrorist operation (ATO) area, lustration period, and tough economic and political situation. The first elections to the Parliament held after Euromaidan – 2014 differed from all the elections by a key moment – it was for the first time when there was no question whether «pro-Russian» or «pro-Ukrainian» forces will win. Artificial ethnic confrontation that was escalated for years lost any sense. It was clear that the «pro-Ukrainian» candidates will win because radical «pro-Russian» ones were now running for quasi-parliaments of the DPR and the LPR. And even the «Opposition alliance» which was based on the remnants of the Party of Regions, represented the interests of the old bureaucracy and associated business, rather than the interests of Russia [2014 Elections... 2018, *Parliamentary Elections 2014... 2018*].

Therefore, the right-wing political forces represented by eight parties received a substantial support within the Western region – 91,75% (Fig. 7, 8).

The segment of voters who supported the «Popular Front» stands out with its 32,6% in the region, which is 10% more than the party's general result. The party won eight first places in the oblasts of WRU. Over 30% of voters supported Yatseniuk's party in Ivano-Frankivsk (the largest result in Ukraine – almost 38%), Ternopil, Volyn, Lviv and Bukovyna. In Halychyna they received more support from peripheral districts, while oblasts centers demonstrated lower support of the party. The worst result of «Popular Front» were observed in Zakarpattia oblast, Rivne and Khmelnytskyi oblasts – less than 30% (Fig. 7, 8.).

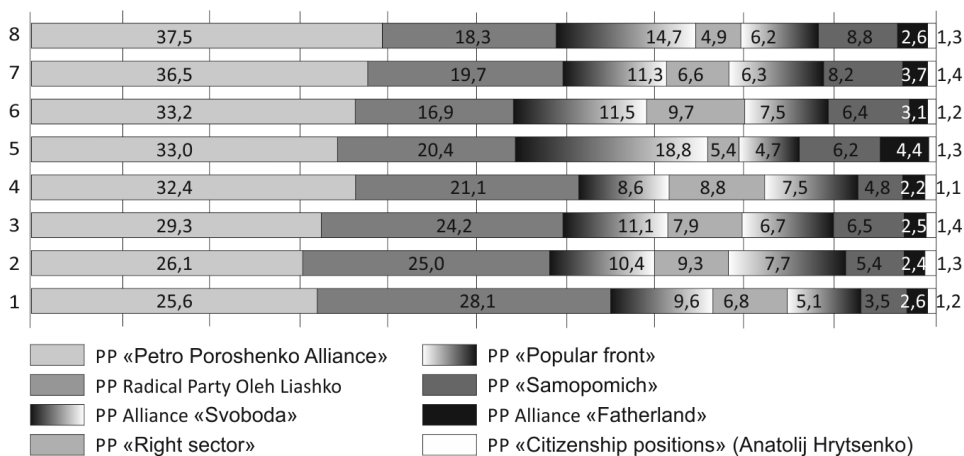


Fig. 8. Electoral support of «right» political forces, %, 2014  
 Note: 1 – Zakarpattia oblast, 2 – Khmelnytskyi oblast, 3 – Rivne oblast, 4 – Chernivtsi oblast, 5 – Lviv oblast, 6 – Volyn oblast, 7 – Ternopil oblast, 8 – Ivano-Frankivsk oblast.

Ryc. 8. Poparcie wyborcze „prawicowych” sił politycznych, %, 2014  
 Source: own study.

Petro Poroshenko Alliance (PPA) polled 21% of the vote and came second in all ATU and in all districts of the region. As Fig. 7, 8 indicates, the second best result (28%)

the presidential party secured in Zakarpattia oblast, where in some districts more than 30% of voters cast their votes in its favour. On the other hand, the worst result was observed in Volyn oblast where only 17% of the votes supported the alliance. Not the best indicators in Lviv region – if half a year ago, about 70% of voters voted for P. Poroshenko, now the party support indicator barely exceeds 20% [2014 Elections... 2018].

The Party «Samopomich» was supported by 13% of residents of Western Ukraine. The success of the party in these elections can be explained by the voters' wish to see new faces in the parliament, who would be able to carry out the reforms in the country. The role of A. Sadovyi's image as an effective mayor as well as beneficial use of Lviv image as a successful European city to support this political party was decisive. However, the activity of «Samopomich» and Sadovyi is assessed positively in Ukraine, whereas in Lviv they are often accused of corruption and kickbacks. Despite this, the result of «Samopomich» is seven third and one fourth in the region. In Ivano-Frankivsk city, four city districts of Lviv and two largest cities of Lviv region: Drohobych and Chervonograd, the party gained more than 20% of the votes of voters. Less than the percentage of 20% «Samopomich» was not enough in Ternopil and Lutsk. In all ATU of the region the party won more votes in regional centres than at the periphery. Less than 10% of electoral support was received in Bukovyna and Zakarpattia oblast, where the party gave leadership to the Radical Party (Fig. 7, 8).

The Radical Party by Oleh Liashko, the Alliances «Fatherland» and «Svoboda» are among those who secured more than 6% of electoral votes in the region.

Oleh Lyashko's party showed the best result in Volyn oblast (almost 10%) and in Bukovyna. Instead, he failed to overcome the five percent barrier in Ivano-Frankivsk oblast.

«Svoboda», which was called the sensation of the previous elections, this time did not conduct its list in VRU: it lacked 0,3% of the votes of voters. It was fatal to the nationalists that the number of their voters in the «nuclear» regions that most actively supported them most decreased. The indicator of «Svoboda» support in Lviv region has decreased by more than six times – from 38% to 6,2%. Nevertheless, the results of the elections prove that «the electoral core» of «Svoboda» is Halychyna, Volyn and Rivne oblasts. There are only two districts in these regions in which «Svoboda» failed to overcome a five percent electoral barrier. The nationalists reached the maximum result in Ivano-Frankivsk – there is a single district in which they garnered more than 10% of the votes of voters. Less than a percentage of this indicator was not enough «Svoboda» in Chortkiv in the Ternopil oblast and Nadvirna in Ivano-Frankivsk oblast.

Yulia Tymoshenko's party did not rank among the three winners in any region and did not score more than 10% of the votes in any constituency in the region. The support of the party was localized in Volyn oblast, Bukovyna and Khmelnytskyi oblast. Instead, up to 5% of «Fatherland» did not reach the Lviv oblast, which a few years ago was considered the «electoral core» of the party (Fig. 7, 8) [2014 Elections: Features and Surprises 2018, Фопець С. 2016, Myrosh M. 2017].

## Conclusions

Thus, analyzing the system of political preferences of the population of the region, we consider the following features as important:

- 1) Western Ukraine is internally heterogeneous, with each region having its mental differences. The virtual curve of ZRU residents' self-awareness as Ukrainians falls from Halychyna through Volyn, Khmelnytskyi, Bukovyna to the lowest point – Zakarpattia oblast. Obviously, the process of becoming patriotic consciousness there is still going on. The process of patriotic awareness formation in Halychyna gets sometimes perverse forms, due to long periods of struggle for national independence, with the relatively liberal Habsburg rule and the activities of the Greek Catholic Church. Instead, Hungarian, Romanian and Russian rule did not provide such an opportunity to other regions, and national potential there was significantly lower [Львів 1998].
- 2) Essential feature of WRU Ukrainians is their self-awareness as Europeans, within the context of their geographic surroundings – states that are moving to the EU and NATO. This clearly distinguishes them from other eastern Ukrainians whose ideological guidelines are different. Thus, in terms of foreign policy, WRU could become a model of European Ukraine, a bridge to the West. Sovereign Ukraine as a member of the European Union and NATO is a definite priority of voters [Березинський 2004].
- 3) In terms of the domestic policy, the region in question is characterized by prevailing religious, cultural and linguistic preferences to economic and pragmatic ones. Thus, the border territory voter votes by listening to his heart [Львів 1998].

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## Summary

The article described the features of modern electoral preferences of the population of Western region of Ukraine. The essence of the concept of electoral preferences has been established. The study of electoral preferences in this region was made in the context of right and left political forces. The analysis of the electoral preferences of the population of the region during the regular and special parliamentary and presidential elections 2010–2015 years has been fulfilled. The regional differences of electoral preferences were analyzed and the areas of electoral sympathy for right-wing or left-wing candidates were localized. The real dynamic changes in electoral preferences of the population of the region have been included. Internal heterogeneity of Western region of Ukraine in terms of political preferences of the population was found. The role of the patriotic consciousness, mental differences in the areas of region, geographical, historical, religious and linguistic factors in the formation of the electoral preferences in the region have been stated.

On the basis of the study note that WRU is traditionally the electoral base of right-wing national-democratic forces. However, political preferences of region are not limited to classical coordinates «left-wing-right-wing» because the role played by cultural and historical characteristics of the region and the foreign policy orientation to the East or West, and behind it and vectors to Europe and Russia is important.

### **Streszczenie**

W artykule opisano cechy współczesnych preferencji wyborczych ludności zachodniego regionu Ukrainy. Ustalono istotę koncepcji preferencji wyborczych. Badanie preferencji wyborczych w tym regionie zostało przeprowadzone w kontekście prawicowych i lewicowych sił politycznych. Dokonano analizy preferencji wyborczych ludności regionu w czasie zwykłych i specjalnych wyborów parlamentarnych i prezydenckich 2010–2015 roku. Przeanalizowano regionalne zróżnicowanie preferencji wyborczych i zlokalizowano obszary sympatii wyborczej dla kandydatów prawicowych lub lewicowych. Uwzględniono rzeczywiste dynamiczne zmiany preferencji wyborczych ludności regionu. Stwierdzono wewnętrzną heterogeniczność zachodniego regionu Ukrainy w zakresie preferencji politycznych ludności. Wskazano na rolę świadomości patriotycznej, zróżnicowanie mentalne obszarów regionu, uwarunkowania geograficzne, historyczne, religijne i językowe w kształtowaniu się preferencji wyborczych w regionie.

Na podstawie badania zauważono, że WRU jest tradycyjnie bazą wyborczą prawicowych sił narodo-demokratycznych. Jednak preferencje polityczne regionu nie ograniczają się do klasycznych współrzędnych „lewicowo-prawicowych”, ponieważ rolę odgrywają kulturowe i historyczne cechy regionu oraz orientacja polityki zagranicznej na Wschód lub Zachód, a za tym kierunki do Europy i Rosji są ważne.