



Weekly Briefing

Poland Social briefing:
Social Preferences before the Local Elections
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Social Preferences before the Local Elections

The latest discussions on the social issues are mainly concentrated on the political preferences of the public opinion. This debate are relevant before the local elections that are scheduled for 21st October. The briefing discusses the latest dynamic in the political preferences of the Polish citizens both at the central and local level.

According to the latest report presented by CBOS if the parliamentary elections will be held in the first half of September, less than three-quarters of adult Poles would like to participate (namely 71 percent). The percentage of respondents who were uncertain about their participation in a possible vote did not change much and counted 15 percent. The number of people rejecting electoral participation in advance dropped to a minimum of 14 percent.

The party that has the strongest public support among Poles still remains the ruling party. In September, the willingness to vote for Law and Justice, Solidarna Polska (Zbigniew Ziobro) and the Agreement (Jaroslaw Gowin) (the Right Wing coalition) was announced by 43 percent of the declared participants in the elections. The second place is occupied by the Civic Platform, which has 18 percent of the support by the election participants. The third place is occupied by Kukiz'15, with seven percent of support. This month, only these three political parties would introduce their representatives to the Sejm - the Lower Chamber of the Polish Parliament. What should be remark, among the declared participants in the elections, 16 percent are undecided and do not know which party would vote for. In comparison to August, the number of undecided voters increased by three percentage points and is the highest since the elections in 2015. The Social Democrats Alliance has enjoyed the same support for two consecutive months four percent. The willingness to vote on the Polish People's Party was also declared by 4% of some voting participants (a drop by one point). The support of three percent of Nowoczesna has not changed. The two percent

of the votes, the Freedom group Janusz Korwin-Mikke and the Razem Party scored in September. All parties with the support of the less than five percent will not enter the Parliament.

What is very visible the Polish citizens still seem very interested in political events, and more often than in previous years would like to take part in the elections. In the particular events of the local elections campaign this interest are favoured. The election campaign, especially in big cities, has inevitably largely a political character and fosters the renewal of the bipolar party sympathies.

This, however, might not be the factor for changing the local government in the elections. According to the CBOS survey the current local government authorities are assessed positively by the citizens in Poland. Against the background of their predecessors, opinions about today's local government officials are even very good. Seven out of ten respondents (71 percent) are currently satisfied with the activities of self-governments in their town, while less than one fifth (19 percent) misjudge their work. The inhabitants of the village speak most positively about self-government authorities (77 percent), while the respondents from the largest agglomerations (48 percent) speak the least frequently. The level of satisfaction with the current local authorities is best demonstrated by the declared willingness to re-elect the same political parties for the next term of office. Almost half of adult Poles (46 percent) would like to support candidates in the upcoming elections to the city council or municipality regarding the option currently ruling in their town. One third (33 percent) would prefer to change the existing authorities and vote for candidates unrelated to them. Every fifth (21 percent) has no specific opinion about this matter.

In the party voters, the potential voters of the Civic Platform and the Polish People's Party (54 percent and 53 percent respectively) would vote for candidates associated with the current municipal or commune authorities. The candidates of current local government are more often accepted than rejected also by the Law and Justice supporters along with co-sponsors (48 percent against 36 percent) and SLD (46 percent against 38 percent). Kukiz'15 voters

almost equally often declare their willingness to vote on current members, which they postulate change (44 percent against 41 percent). Only Nowoczesna supporters would like to change the current council of their city or municipality (46 percent) rather than extend its mandate for another term (42 percent).

According to the announcements of the declared participants of the elections, the Law and Justice has the chance to introduce the largest number of the members to regional assemblies together with the group's affiliates. Over one third of those electing local government elections (35 percent) are ready to vote for the candidates of this formation. After a slight drop in July, support for the ruling formation increased by five percentage points and is now the highest since May. The Civic Platform and Nowoczesna coalition are located in the second place, having the support of 18 percent of voters declared by voters. A similar percentage (6 percent) would vote for Kukiz'15 candidates. Less than every twentieth declared voter would support the Social Democrats Alliances (4 percent).

The Law and Justice along with affiliated parties is a favourite of the residents of the villages, and to a lesser extent, cities with up to 100,000 inhabitants. In the countryside the dominance of the ruling party over the most dangerous competitor the Civic Platform and Nowoczesna coalition is almost fourfold (39 percent to 11 percent). A relatively strong grouping in the countryside remains the Polish People's Party, which is planned to be voted by every eleventh inhabitant (9 percent), however, the Kukiz'15 movement (8 percent) is not much in favour of the peasants. The Social Democrats Alliances has a smaller support in the countryside (3 percent).

In the smallest cities (up to 19,999 inhabitants) the Law and Justice the advantage over the coalition the Civic Platform and Nowoczesna is almost double (40 percent to 22 percent). In addition, the Polish People's Party has a relatively strong support here (8 percent), while Kukiz'15 and The Social Democrats Alliances (up to 4 percent) can count on half of the votes. In medium-sized cities (from 20,000 to 99,999 inhabitants) - unlike in July, the

Law and Justice is also clearly more popular than the Civic Platform and Nowoczesna coalition. While the Law and Justice has advantage over the Law and Justice and Nowoczesna a month ago, it was 8 percentage points, in August it is - as in the smallest cities it almost doubled (33 percent to 17 percent). Among the other parties, the Polish People's Party, Kukiz'15 and the Social Democrats Alliances (5 percent each) have the same chances of introducing their members to regional councils in these cities. In large but not the largest cities (from 100,000 to 499,99 inhabitants), the ruling party and its most dangerous competitor - the coalition of the Civic Platform and Nowoczesna enjoy relatively huge support (27percent to 26 percent). Of the remaining groups, the Kukiz'15 movement has the most supporters (8 percent). Inhabitants of large cities most often from the entire population would like to vote for local non-party electoral committees (7 percent). Relatively big number of voters want to vote on the Polish People's Party (6 percent), while fewer respondents are going to support the Social Democrats Alliances candidates in these places (4 percent). In the biggest agglomerations (500,000 and more people), the coalition of the Civic Platform and Nowoczesna prevails over the Law and Justice. However, while at the beginning of the summer the advantage was almost double (31 percent to 17 percent), it fell significantly at the end (35percent to 29 percent). Among the candidates of the other party committees, the inhabitants of the largest agglomerations would most often like to vote for representatives of the PSL (6 percent) and the Kukiz'15 movement (5 percent).

Conclusions

The upcoming local elections shows that the Polish public opinion is still driven by the political sentiments. This, however, might be understood at the central level or the presidential elections, but at the local level society should be driven by more pragmatic approach. From the above discussed perspective we might acknowledge that the local elections has a lot to do with the central policy. The candidates of the Law and Justice use the narrative of having support of the

central government and subsidies for projects at the local level. Contrary to this the Civic Platform and Nowoczesna use the arguments of the threaten Polish self-governance by the ongoing centralization processes sponsored by the central government. The competition between ruling party and the opposition at the local level should be understood as the centralization of the local politics in Poland. This argument is supported by the fact that only four percent of electorate will vote for the local organizations, not affiliated to only political party.

The outcome of the upcoming elections in October this year will show that the Polish society is divided into the inhabitants of the big cities and the inhabitants of the small cities and countryside. Traditionally the Law and Justice will win in the Eastern part of Poland, while the Civic Platform and Nowoczesna in Western and Northern part of Poland. This also support the argument that the local elections mirrored of those from the central level and in fact means the centralization of local politics in Poland.