

THE CITIES OF Happy PEOPLE



Youth survey "The Cities of Happy People" as part of

"City Is Me" Urban Movement

June, 13 2024 - August 6, 2024

The Cities of Happy People

Content

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METHODOLOGY

Research method: quantitative online survey.

Data collection took place from June 13 to August 6, 2024 among kids and teens aged 10-17 who currently live in Ukrainian cities or communities.

Geography of the study: Ukraine.

A total of 1800 responses were collected, and after statistical procedures to clean the data set, the number of respondents totaled 1200.

The online survey was conducted as part of an after-school teen program – the urban movement "City Is Me" project. It is a large-scale multi-component educational project of extracurricular activities for children and youth, which is focused on cities and communities, the role of residents and their involvement in decision-making. The responses of young people do not reflect the opinion of the entire Ukrainian population stratum aged 10-17. The results represent the thoughts of the respondents and illustrate a general trend in the opinions of the Ukrainian youth.

Research limitations

- Certain regions and areas are not fully represented in the survey due to problems with accessing respondents.
- The survey contains a large number of free responses, which leads to distorted results for statistical comparison.
- The survey was conducted online, so it is hard to verify the identity of respondents, their age, social status and place of residence.
- Data collection was done in a random manner.



KEY FINDINGS

The majority of surveyed Ukrainian kids and teens between the ages of 10 and 17 feel happy about living in their city or community. However, every tenth respondent indicates the opposite.

The majority of respondents indicated that their perception of happiness in the city largely depends on family members, the opportunity to interact with them in recreation areas, parks, at home, or on their home streets, where they feel most secure. Children and youth appear to prefer spending time in parks and playgrounds, citing these places as conducive to socialization, interaction with other individuals or enjoying a tranquil environment.

Despite their positive assessment of their urban environment, young people in Ukraine report numerous challenges. These include a lack of recreational spaces, high exposure to street danger, excess traffic, and a lack of cultural events. On top of that, the surveyed cite the low quality of public transportation, poor air quality, and chaotic housing development that mars up the city's outline. Only a small cohort of respondents expressed complete satisfaction with the current state of their city.

While discussing the most critical problems, the respondents identified the need to address ecological issues, including poor air quality, polluted environment, and lack of drinking water. Additionally, respondents expressed concern about corruption and the danger posed by other city residents.

The survey indicated that the **youths have mingled feelings as for belonging to the city**. They also perceive that their needs and interests are frequently overlooked by the current authorities and older residents, which deepens the feel of isolation and underestimation within society.

To enhance youth engagement in the city, respondents suggest creating additional spaces for communication and meetings, as well as connecting with city authorities to facilitate greater involvement in the city's affairs. Kids and teens express a desire to observe tangible outcomes resulting from their actions and to participate in change-making process. However, they encounter challenges related to lack of information or communication channels.

The majority of surveyed kids and teens talk about urban issues with adults at least occasionally, however, a noteworthy number of them perceive that their perspectives are not taken seriously due to the age. Engagement in volunteerism and initiatives serves to affirm the role of young people in urban life. Nevertheless, a significant number of them remain uncertain as to the most effective means of exerting influence and effecting change.

If they had a chance to assume the role of mayor, young citizens would prioritize the resolution of big urban issues, including road repairs, landscaping, infrastructure enhancement and the mitigation of environmental threats.

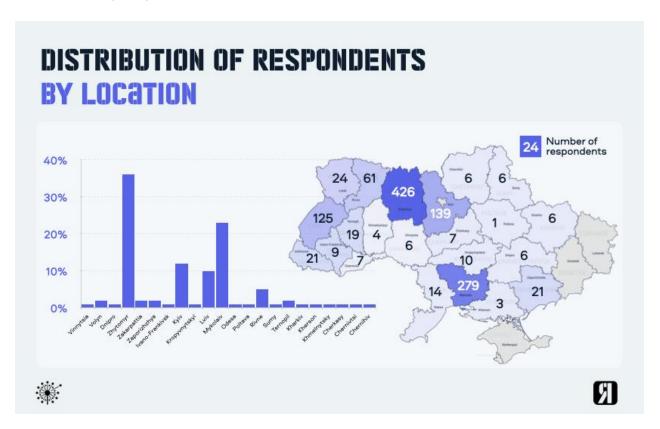
The majority of respondents indicated a desire to address the interests of the community, including the involvement of residents in decision-making processes and the eradication of corruption.



SURVEYED YOUTH PROFILE

The group of respondents included young city residents aged 10-17 from 70 cities of Ukraine. The largest share of them lives in Zhytomyr and Mykolaiv regions: 36% and 23% respectively. Kyiv (12%) and Lviv (10%) regions are also well represented.

The survey population was predominantly female (62%), with males comprising 34% of the sample. Age groups were represented in a relatively balanced manner, with 49% of respondents falling within the 10-13 age range and 51% within the 14-17 age range.



Distribution of respondents by location.

Number of respondents

Region

n	%	
6	<1%	Vinnytsia
24	2%	Volyn
6	<1%	Dnipro
426	36%	Zhytomyr
21	2%	Zakarpattia
21	2%	Zaporizhzhya
9	1%	Ivano-Frankivsk



139	12%	Kyiv
10	1%	Kropyvnytskyi
125	10%	Lviv
279	23%	Mykolaiv
14	1%	Odesa
1	<1%	Poltava
61	5%	Rivne
6	<1%	Sumy
19	2%	Ternopil
6	1%	Kharkiv
3	<1%	Kherson
4	<1%	Khmelnytsky
7	<1%	Cherkasy
7	<1%	Chernivtsi
6	<1%	Chernihiv

Geographic area

15%	West
25%	South
54%	North
3%	East
3%	Cente

Gender

34%	Male
62%	Female
4%	Refused to tell

Age

49%	10-13
51%	14-17





MAIN POINTS

This section reveals advantages of living in a city, as seen by the respondents.

ARE KIDS AND TEENS HAPPY IN THEIR CITIES?

62% of positive responses show that the surveyed Ukrainian youth typically feels happy as for living in their city or community. Though, every tenth respondent feels the opposite,

Parks and city green zones prove to be the main factors contributing to the feel of happiness, as 22% the respondent say. The kids and teens stated they like to spent time outdoors, play games or stay in calm environment as far from traffic noise and other city irritants as possible. It is worth noting that 11% of the surveyed also consider leisure areas, such as beaches and waterfront promenades, to be also important. The cities itself, its infrastructure are not that significant for teen well-being as compared to the opportunity to rest and recharge in an outdoors setting.

Moreover, the city is **often associated with the close ones and home:** 17% and 15% responses respectively. It's family and friends that the youth has the best memories about living in the city with. They stroll with them in the abovementioned parks, and have fun outdoors. **Meanwhile home is mainly considered by the respondents as a place of absolute safety and comfort.** They often state, that only at home they can feel calm and happy, since there is a family there, as well as an opportunity to enjoy hobbies. **Apart from home, the youth also feels safe at their nearest streets and areas (14%)**, where most of their close ones usually live. Streets often serve as a space for fun, whereas central streets, as mentioned by kids and teens, at times host outdoor concerts or youth events which seem the most visually attractive.



Feeling happy about living in a city

62% of young respondents feel happy, 11% feel the opposite.

Green areas access – 22%; Staying in touch with the close ones – 17%; Feeling safe at home – 15%.



Entertainment options are also an important factor contributing to the happiness of children and youth in the city, as noted by 14% of respondents. It is important for kids and teens to have a place to play, such as playgrounds where they can have fun with friends. Cinemas, zoos, theaters, and cheap cafes with tasty snacks were also on the list. When asked about leisure facilities, respondents underline that these places allow them to socialize, find new friends and spend time with old ones. Mass events, such as concerts, bring joy to 6% of young people surveyed.

The surveyed Ukrainian youths are also active in their individual development and search for soulmates, as 8% of them stated that various places for informal education make them happy: sports clubs, language courses, dance studios, computer science courses, etc.

City residents, the ability to ask them for help, and the feeling of safety from being with strangers also make children and youth happy.

2% of respondents are completely satisfied with the city and feel happy just being there. The same percentage doesn't feel happy in the city.

Feeling happy about living in one's city/community

62%	Нарру
27%	It depends, sometimes happy, sometimes not
11%	Not happy

What makes the youth happy in a city?

22%	Parks and green spaces
17%	Close people [friends, family, relatives]
15%	Home
14%	Places of leisure [playgrounds, cinemas, zoos, theaters, restaurants]
14%	Home grounds in the city [home streets, native neighborhood]
11%	Areas for recreation [beaches, promenades, quiet places in the open air].
8%	Places for extracurricular activities [clubs, studios, community centers]
7%	Friendly city residents
6%	Entertaining mass events [concerts, festivals, exhibitions, competitions, fairs, discos]
5%	City vibe [peace, quiet, modernity, dynamism]
4%	Cultural heritage of the city [ancient architecture, presence of cultural monuments].
4%	Availability of various shops in the city [food, clothing, hobby shops].
3%	Feeling safe in the city
3%	Attractiveness of the city
3%	The school I go to
2%	The whole city makes me happy
2%	Nothing in the city makes me happy



1%	Less visible impact of the war compared to other cities
1%	High-quality public transportation
1%	Cleanliness of the city
<1%	Opportunity to be involved in city development
2%	I do not know
8%	I refuse to answer
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WHAT MAKES YOUTH UNHAPPY IN ITS CITY?

Having analyzed the aspects that make the youth happy in Ukrainian cities and communities, here we represent the main cons of living in cities and communities, as stated by the respondents.

It is obvious that kids and teens feeling happy about living in a city due to the quiet parks and an opportunity to hang out with friends there, would identify lack of such places as one of the key problems in the city.

27% of the respondents believe their cities lack leisure areas, where one could walk and spend time with family and friends. 25% stated that there should be more green zones and parks to relax. One of the most frequently mentioned problems was scarcity of street benches to sit and chat or rest after the walk. Smaller cities seem not to have enough walkable areas, and the old ones are no longer attractive. The youth feels the lack of places to entertain and wants to be closer to nature, since the cities with little or no parks become noisy and no good for leisure.

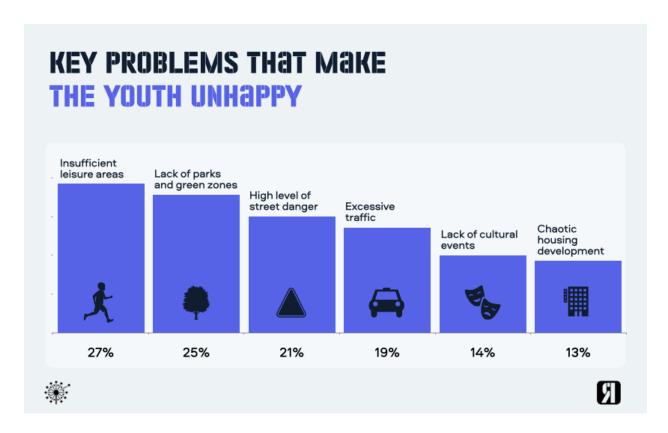
The problem of cities for kids and teens is the high level of danger, which mostly comes from strangers (21%). The surveyed stated they are afraid to walk alone in the city because of drunken people, especially after dark. Girls were more likely to mention that they were afraid to walk because of the risk of being attacked by drunk men who misbehaved. Boys point out that other teenagers are also dangerous when they are intoxicated, as they can pick on others for their looks. The problem with alcohol also affects the quality of parks and recreation areas, as people often drink in such places, depriving teenagers of the opportunity to spend their time good and safe. The danger also arises from possible shelling of the city and the lack of proper shelters.

Excessive traffic is yet another problem (19%). Young people mention that drivers often violate the speed limit, causing accidents. Chaotic parking, due to the lack of sufficient parking zones, makes it impossible to play on playgrounds or ride a bike, as cars are randomly parked there.

The surveyed kids and teens also complain about insufficient cultural events, and they would to attend more concerts, festivals, or discos. They emphasize that during the war, any entertainment activities for young people have practically disappeared.

The respondents are also concerned about the city outline and look, pointing out that they are upset with the extremely chaotic housing development, where old buildings sit next to new modern tower-blocks. This, in turn, spoils the city style.





Key problems that make the youth unhappy

Insufficient leisure areas: 27%; Lack of parks and green zones: 25%; High level of street danger: 21%; Excessive traffic: 19%; Lack of cultural events: 14%; Chaotic housing development: 13%.

In big cities kids and teens often use public transport, thus there is a need to improve it. The respondents mention, that vehicles are old and dirty.

Also, every tenth surveyed pointed out poor air quality in cities, which drops due to the excess traffic and factories in central parts of the city.

Only 3% of respondents are fully satisfied with living in a city.

What makes the youth unhappy in cities?

27%	Insufficient space to socialize with friends/family [leisure facilities]
25%	Scarce parks and green spaces
21%	Feeling of insecurity
19%	Overloading the city with cars [fast traffic, traffic jams, random parking]
14%	Lack of cultural events [concerts, fairs, festivals].
13%	Chaotic housing development [unregulated, random construction with no style]
12%	Poor public transportation [old and dirty vehicles, overcrowded]
11%	Poor air quality
6%	War



6%	Littered environment [garbage on the streets]
4%	Poor quality of buildings and structures [crumbling buildings, unattractive appearance]
3%	I am totally satisfied
2%	Feeling lonely in the city
2%	Corruption and ignoring the problems of residents by the authorities
2%	Poor road network quality
1%	A lot of stray animals
1%	The city is not improving
1%	There are not enough institutions for non-formal education [clubs, sections, community centers]

Boys and girls were also asked what problem seems the most serious to them.

While assessing the problems as critical, the youth no longer focuses on space for entertainment and recreation. The major issue concerns the environment: 20% of respondents complain about poor air and water quality, and 15% about the environment being polluted. They mention that it is sometimes difficult to breathe and there is very little drinking water. Parks and recreational areas are often littered with plastic and bottles that are not taken away, which not only mars the city but also robs people of having a pleasant and satisfying outdoor experience.

Also, 12% of young Ukrainians consider **war to be the biggest problem**, as there is a constant threat of shelling. It should be noted that this problem is more often articulated by young people from the East and South of Ukraine.



Critical city problems

Poor air and water quality: 20%, Littered spaces: 15%; War, specifically east and south: 12%

According to the respondents the danger, which mostly comes from other city residents, is also critical, as kids and teens often avoid going out for walks because of dangerous people (9%).

Despite their young age, kids and teens point out corruption in the city. They frequently refer to the fact that unnecessary paving is installed or buildings in decent condition are rebuilt instead of solving problems that are important to people.

Only 4% believe that there are no critical problems in their city.

The most critical city problem

20%	Poor air / water quality
15%	Polluted environment
12%	War
9%	Security issues
8%	Poor road network quality
7%	Scarce parks and green spaces
5%	Few leisure facilities
5%	Excessive traffic
5%	Corrupted authorities, that ignore the problems of residents
5%	Lack of cultural events
4%	Poor quality of public transportation
4%	The city has no critical problems
3%	Reconstruction of damaged or affected residential and non-residential buildings
3%	Reconstruction of damaged or affected residential and non-residential buildings Chaotic housing development
3%	Chaotic housing development
3% 2%	Chaotic housing development Stray animals
3% 2% 2%	Chaotic housing development Stray animals Poverty of residents
3% 2% 2% 2%	Chaotic housing development Stray animals Poverty of residents People's disrespect for each other
3% 2% 2% 2% 2%	Chaotic housing development Stray animals Poverty of residents People's disrespect for each other Lack of non-formal education for teenagers
3% 2% 2% 2% 2% 1%	Chaotic housing development Stray animals Poverty of residents People's disrespect for each other Lack of non-formal education for teenagers Poor quality of buildings and structures
3% 2% 2% 2% 2% 1%	Chaotic housing development Stray animals Poverty of residents People's disrespect for each other Lack of non-formal education for teenagers Poor quality of buildings and structures Poor quality of school education



1%	Poor accessibility
1%	Need to involve adolescents in city life
5%	I do not know
5%	I refuse to answer

A vital part of city living is allowing residents stay mobile and enjoy high quality of life for each of its residents and visitors, so we asked our young audience whether they consider their city to be barrier-free and comfortable for everyone. A **third of respondents said that their city is fully accessible, while the rest disagreed.**

Level of city accessibility

32%	City is accessible
42%	50/50
26%	City is not accessible

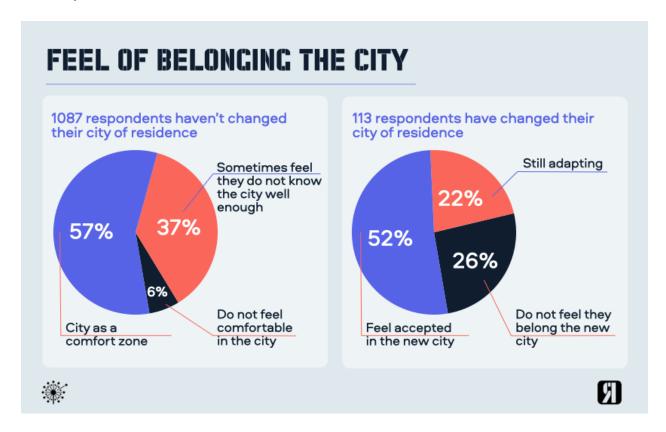


YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN CITY LIFE

In this section we will analyze whether the youth feels like it belongs its own city and find out what problems are viewed by the respondents as the most critical ones.

Slightly more than half of the surveyed respondents who have not changed their city of residence see their city as a comfort zone. 37% feel that they do not know the city well enough, and only 6% say that they do not feel comfortable in their native city.

Among those who have changed their city of residence, more than half indicate that they feel the city has accepted them. 22% are still not used to the city and are still adapting to it. 26% do not feel like they belong the city where they have moved.



FEEL OF BELONGING THE CITY

1087 respondents haven't changed their city of residence

57% - City as a comfort zone/37% - Sometimes feel they do not know the city well enough/6% - Do not feel comfortable in the city

113 respondents have changed their city of residence

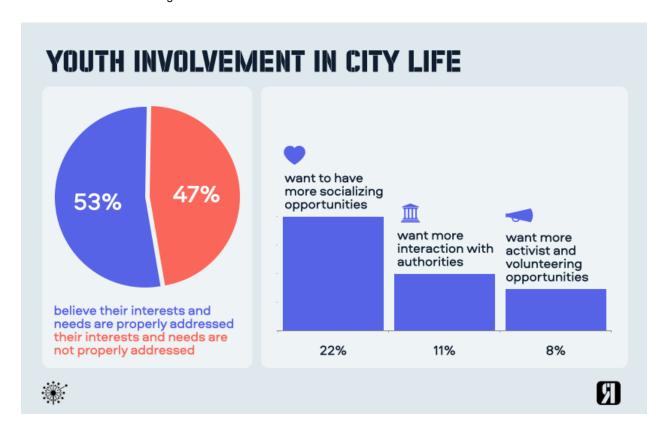
52% - Feel accepted in the new city/ 22% - Still adapting/ 26% - Do not feel they belong the new city

We asked our young citizens whether they believe that their needs and interests are heard in the city. Their opinions split. Nearly half of the respondents think that their interests are properly addressed; while the other half says that they are not.



Estimating the most critical needs, respondents mostly mentioned recreational, entertainment, and social needs. 22% of them need recreation areas and parks in the city, 17% mentioned leisure facilities, including playgrounds, cinemas, discos, etc. The surveyed lack places to spend their time, so they want to attend various cultural events, such as concerts or festivals. Usually, such events are too expensive for teenagers, so 4% say that it is important for them to have cheaper entertainment options.

14% of respondents also named the need for places for communication and socializing. We assume that the reason is the lack of quality communication between children and teenagers due to the war and distance learning. Children in cities are estranged from each other.



YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN CITY LIFE

53% believe their interests and needs are properly addressed

47 believe their interests and needs are not properly addressed

22% - want to have more socializing opportunities; 11% - want more interaction with authorities; 8% - want more activist and volunteering opportunities.

The survey also revealed that the youth in cities feel deprived, unlike the senior age group: 5% say that their voices are not respected and they are not treated as fully-fledged members of society, while 4% indicate that they want to be given more responsibility and freedom to express oneself in the city.

Only 1% of respondents believe that there are no critical needs for young people in the city.

Youth's most critical needs

22% Recreation areas, parks and green spaces



17%	Leisure facilities
14%	Entertainment events
14%	Spaces for socializing with adolescents
9%	Improving the quality of formal and non-formal education
6%	Improving safety in the city
5%	Considering the young people's opinion and accepting them as fully-fledged members of society
4%	Cheap and free offers for teenagers
4%	Opportunities for young people to be get more responsibility and express themselves
3%	End of the war
3%	New shops
1%	Psychological support centers
1%	Improving the quality of public transportation
1%	Creating income opportunities for teens
1%	No critical needs
5%	I do not know
19%	I refuse to answer

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The surveyed kids and teens came up with their own ways to promote greater youth involvement in city life. The most popular suggestion was to create spaces for young people to socialize (22%). Respondents suggested creating youth spaces, hobby groups, or simply arranging meetings of community representatives with young residents where they can get to know each other and find like-minded people (11%).

Some of the respondents already have ideas and are engaged in activist communities, but they do not know how to reach the city authorities. Their suggestion is to create opportunities for young people to interact with the administration, in terms of joint meetings and feedback. The authorities are mostly closed to communication, especially with children, but the youth wants to get a feedback on their actions and observe changes in the city.

To participate in the development of the city or community, the youth wants to feel needed and have its needs met in the city through entertainment events, attention to their interests, and leisure facilities.

The respondents also would like to participate in newly created youth organizations, where like-minded people can join initiatives and contribute to the city wellbeing. The challenge is that, despite the existence of such organizations or other initiatives, the surveyed boys and girls claim that they do not know how to join them because there is no relevant communication on it. Poor information is also a common issue in other campaigns, activities or volunteer events.

3% of respondents believe that young people are not interested in this type of involvement, so nothing can inspire them.



What can improve youth involvement in city/community life?

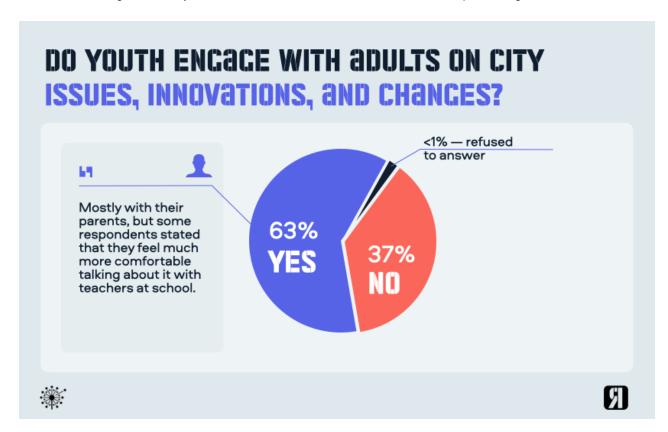
22%	Creating places for young people to communicate and meet each other
11%	Creating opportunities for youth to interact with the authorities
11%	Like-minded people
10%	Entertainment events
10%	Hearing the voice of young people, when it goes about life and development of the city
8%	New leisure facilities that young people need
8%	Creating and encouraging participation in youth organizations
5%	Informing teenagers about opportunities for youth involvement in city life
4%	Charity events [to support the environment, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the poor, the homeless].
3%	Nothing
3%	Offer rewards for youth involvement in city life
1%	End of the war
17%	I do not know
12%	I refuse to answer



DO KIDS AND TEENS FEEL THEIR IMPACT ON CITY LIFE?

In this section we will scrutinize the impact of youth on city and aspects, that according to the survey, give the respondents the feel of influence on city life.

Our final question was whether young people discuss problems, innovations, and changes in the city with adults. The majority of respondents (63%) indicated that they talk to adults about city life at least sometimes. Mostly with their parents, but some respondents stated that they feel much more comfortable talking about it with teachers at school. At the same time 37% say they do not discuss it with adults. The main reason for this is that parents do not treat their thoughts seriously and consider them as too childish and not worth implementing.



DO KIDS AND TEENS DISCUSS THE PROBLEMS, INNOVATIONS AND CHANGES IN THE CITY WITH ADULTS?

63% - YES – "Mostly with their parents, but some respondents stated that they feel much more comfortable talking about it with teachers at school." 37% - NO 1% refused to answer

More than half of the surveyed (59%) feel that their influence on the city is low, at the level of 0-40%. 20% estimate their influence to be moderate (50-60%), and the same proportion of respondents say that their influence on the city is high.

Youth feel of influence on city/community life

59%	Low level [0-40%]
20%	Average level [50-60%]



The most effective way for young people to feel their own influence on the city is to participate in volunteering and other city initiatives. Respondents mentioned fairs dedicated to supporting the Armed Forces of Ukraine, environmental initiatives, or distributing food to the homeless. Moreover, young girls and boys are inspired by meeting motivated people and working with like-minded peers, where they share their ideas and initiatives for the benefit of the city.

Some respondents claim that their personal traits play an important role in influencing the development of the city, as they are not afraid to take risks, are curious about their city, and determined to find ways to act. It is worth noting that due to the fact that the respondents are school students, a small proportion of them believe that they influence the city via their academic achievements, awards for success, and participation in competitions.

The biggest obstacle that prevents young people from feeling their own impact on the life of their city or community is a lack of awareness of what "impact" means: a quarter of respondents shared this opinion.

Another problem is ageism towards kids and teens. They feel that they are being left out, and their thoughts are not respected in society because of age. The respondents complain that their opinions are ignored (17%). 7% say that they do not know how to influence and who to address.

13% of respondents do not even try to exert any influence on the functioning of the city. 6% mentioned corruption.



FEEL OF IMPACT ON THE CITY

Level of influence on city life 59% - low; 21% - significant

Major obstacles 25% - poor awareness 17% - age-dependent disregard



What helps the youth feel its impact on city life?

8%	Social initiative engagement and volunteering
7%	Meeting new people, working with like-minded individuals
3%	Personal qualities [confidence, determination, interest].
2%	Good academic achievements and participation in competitions

What prevents young people from feeling their own impact on the life of their city?

25%	Not knowing what impact is
17%	Age-dependent rejection of young people's opinions in society
13%	"I don't know how to influence and I don't try to exert any influence"
7%	Not given a chance to express their opinion
6%	Corruption and ignoring the needs of residents by the authorities
3%	Indifference of other residents
3%	Weak environment
3%	One voice can do nothing
2%	War and feeling of danger
1%	Lack of desire to influence the current city of residence
7%	I refuse to answer

We also enquired what the respondents would change in their city if they were given a chance to become a mayor and have their own way of running the city.

Remarkably, the biggest issues that young people would care about are not the lack of leisure facilities or entertainment events – they would rather address more serious challenges. Approximately one in ten respondents indicates that they would first repair roads in the city and increase the number of green areas. Roughly the same number of young girls and boys would engage in smart development of the city's infrastructure and housing. This includes putting a ban on illegal construction, controlling all construction projects in the city, and improving the facades to make the city more attractive.

Some of the respondents would prioritize solving the city's environmental problems: cleaning the air, water, and dealing with waste.





WHAT DOES THE YOUTH OFFER TO IMPROVE CITY LIVING?

The majority of respondents would also like to solve environmental issues in their cities

11% - Road repairs

11% - Green areas increase

6% - Fight against corruption

7% of respondents said that before taking any action, they would first ask the city's residents for their ideas and thus would gradually solve the emerging problems. This correlates with the fight against corruption and acting exclusively for the benefit of the city residents.

3% of the surveyed do not want to be mayor. The same number would not change anything in the city.

If I were a major...

11%	Repair of roads
11%	Increasing the level of greenery
9%	Construction of new leisure facilities
9%	Smart construction of infrastructure and civilian buildings in the city
8%	Air and water purification
7%	Fighting against garbage
7%	Taking into account the opinions of city residents



7%	Improving the security situation
6%	Eradication of corruption
6%	Increasing the number of recreation areas
6%	Creating jobs for young people
6%	Fighting poverty
4%	Improving the public transportation system
4%	Increasing the number of pedestrian areas and bicycle paths
3%	"I don't want to be a mayor"
3%	"I don't want to change anything"
3%	Support for the Armed Forces
3%	Taking care of stray animals
2%	Preservation of cultural heritage
2%	Implementation of barrier-free access
2%	Increasing cheap and free offers for young people
1%	Attracting investment and developing local business
1%	Creating more parking zones
4%	I do not know
22%	I refuse to answer

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