

# Belarus: Increased Economic Prosperity At the Cost of Fewer Freedoms



*Findings and Analysis From New InterMedia Research,*

*15 March 2006*





# Highlights

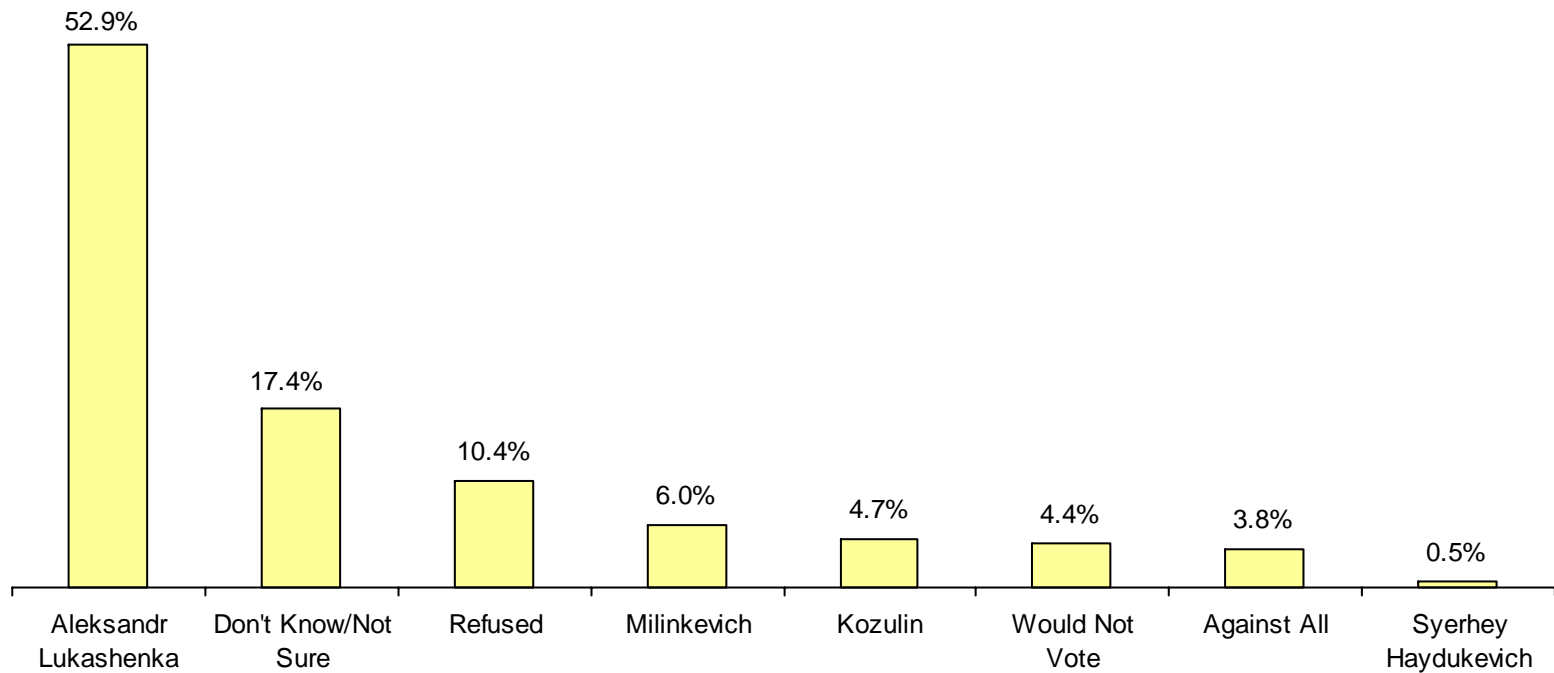
- ◆ **Lukashenka continues to garner support from slightly over half of the population**
- ◆ **The opposition does best among the young and the educated**
- ◆ **Access to sources of independent information affect public opinion, however access appears to be decreasing**
- ◆ **Less than half the population believes that elections will be free and fair**
- ◆ **This election is unlikely to lead to a “colored” revolution, but opposition supporters could bring change in the future**



## How Will People Vote: Likely Outcomes and Influences

# The Majority Of Belarusians Support Lukashenka

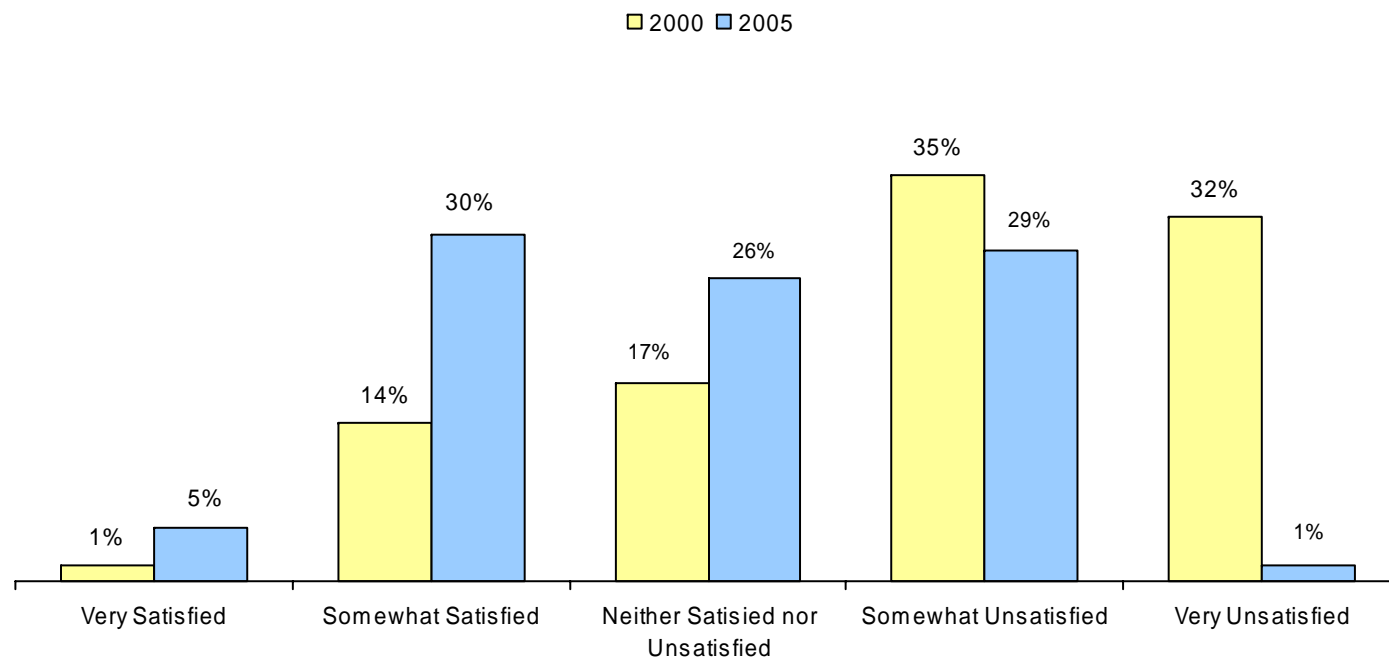
If the presidential election were held today, how would you vote?



Base: n=1,085 adults [18 and over] in Belarus, 2006

# Support for Lukashenka Comes as a Result of Increased Economic Satisfaction

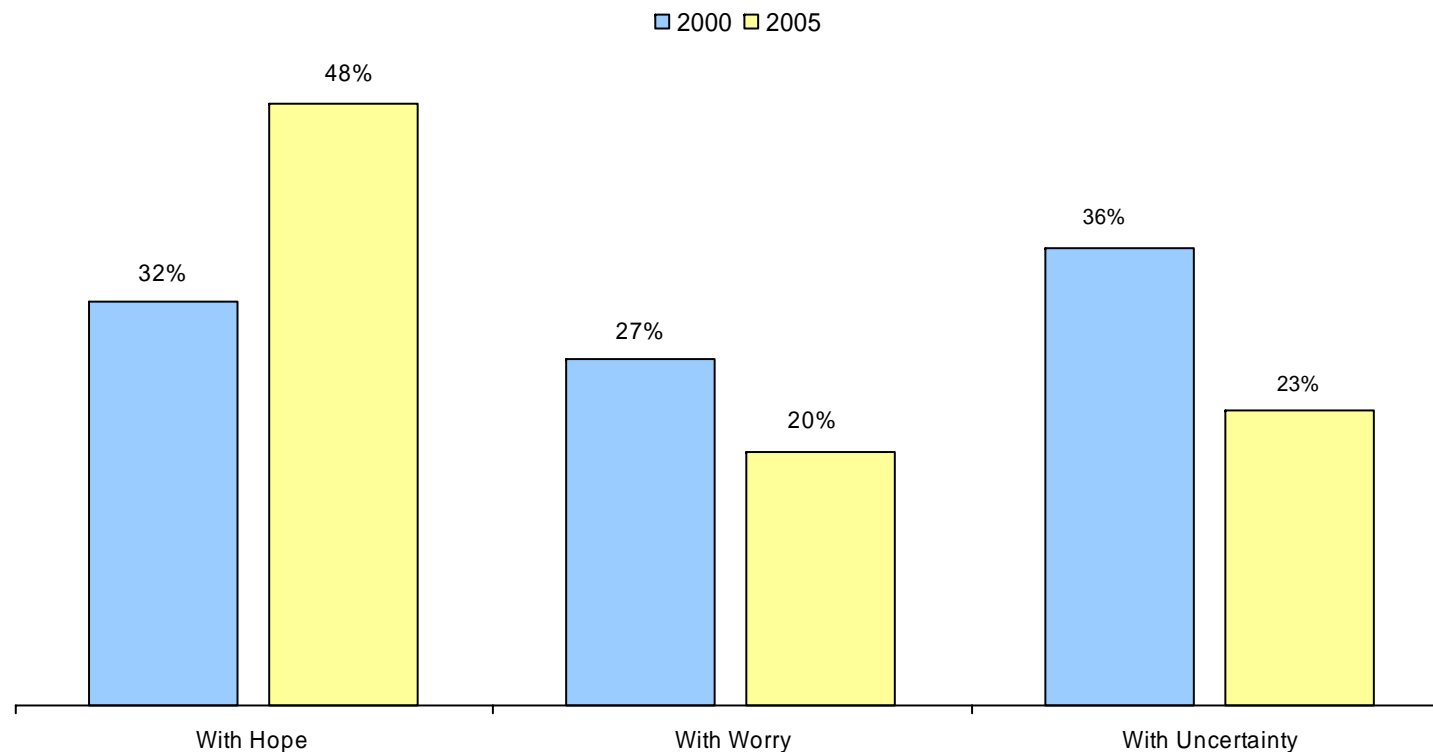
How Satisfied are You with Your Own Standard of Living?



Base: 2005 n=2,166; 2000 n=2079 adults [15 and over] in Belarus

# As Well As Increased Hope for the Future

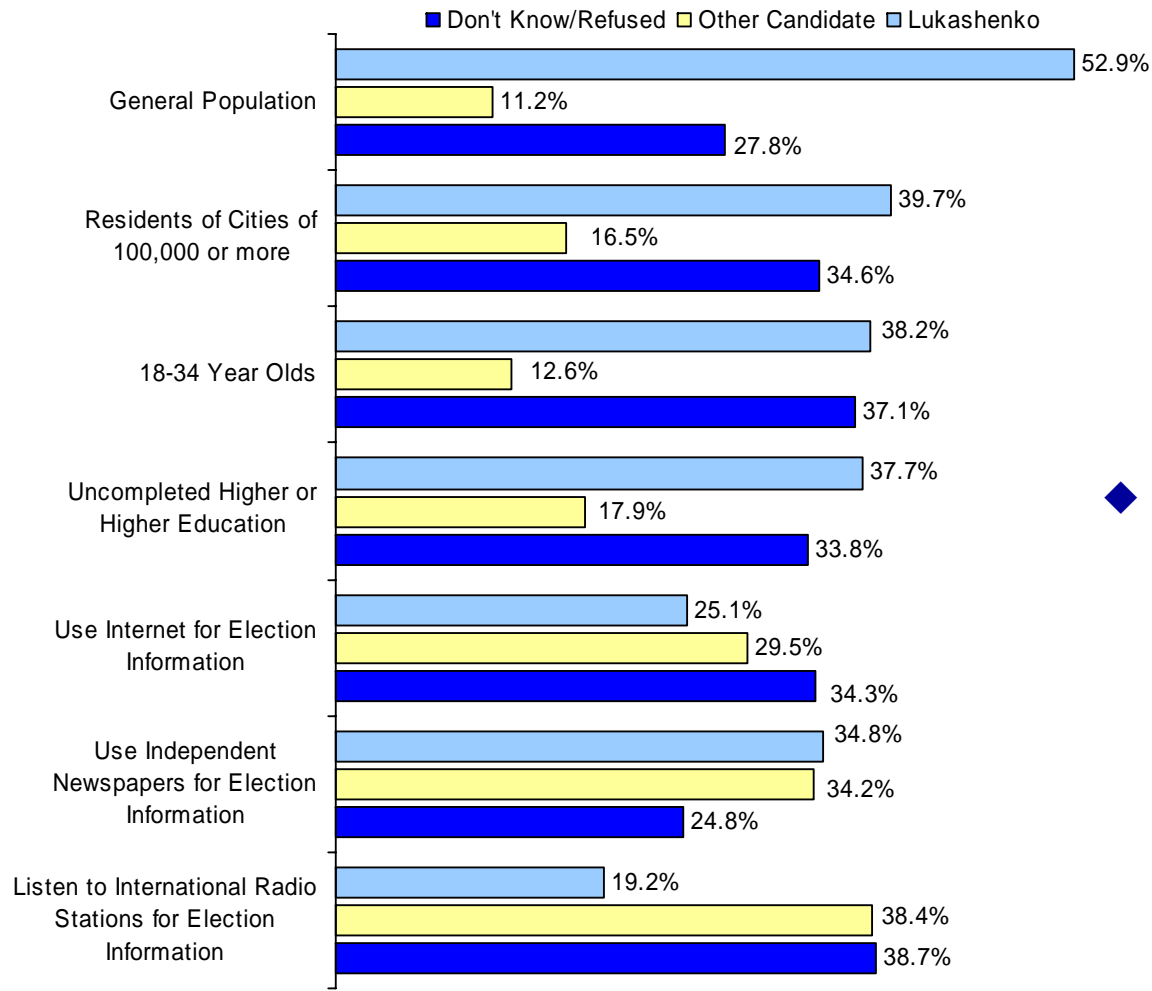
## How Do You View the Next 12 Months?



Base: 2005 n=2,166; 2000 n=2079 adults [15 and over] in Belarus

# Opposition Supporters Tend to be Educated, Urban, and Use Independent News Sources

If the presidential election were held today, how would you vote?



◆ These groups are also more likely to view lack of free press, lack of rule of law, and corruption as critical or serious problems

Base: General population, n = 1086; 18-34 year olds, n=356; higher education, n=262; internet users, n=38; ind. newspapers, n=47; intl radio, n=25, 2006

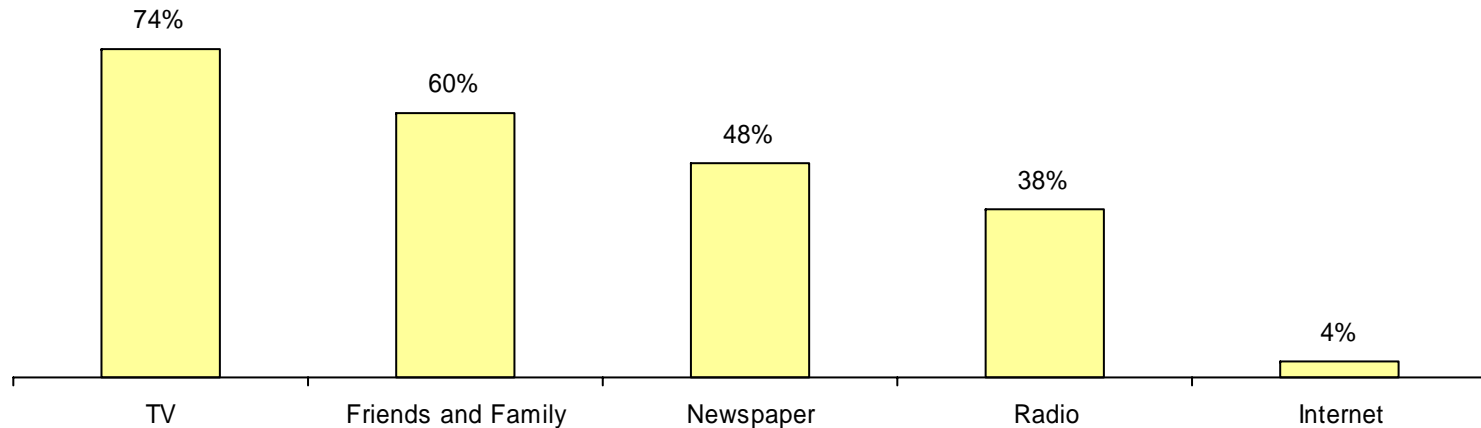


## Independent Media Sources have Low Reach and are Increasingly Difficult to Access

- ◆ 2.3% reported using international radio stations as sources of news and information about the election and 5.1% reported using international TV
- ◆ Access to independent newspapers is falling
  - The readership of Narodnaya Volya, the most popular independent newspaper, fell from 26.5 percent weekly in 2004 to 4.1 percent in 2005
- ◆ 9.7 percent report using the internet on a weekly basis (September 2005) and only 3.5 reported following the elections on the internet (2006)

# Television is the Main Way to Stay Informed

How have you been following news about the upcoming election?

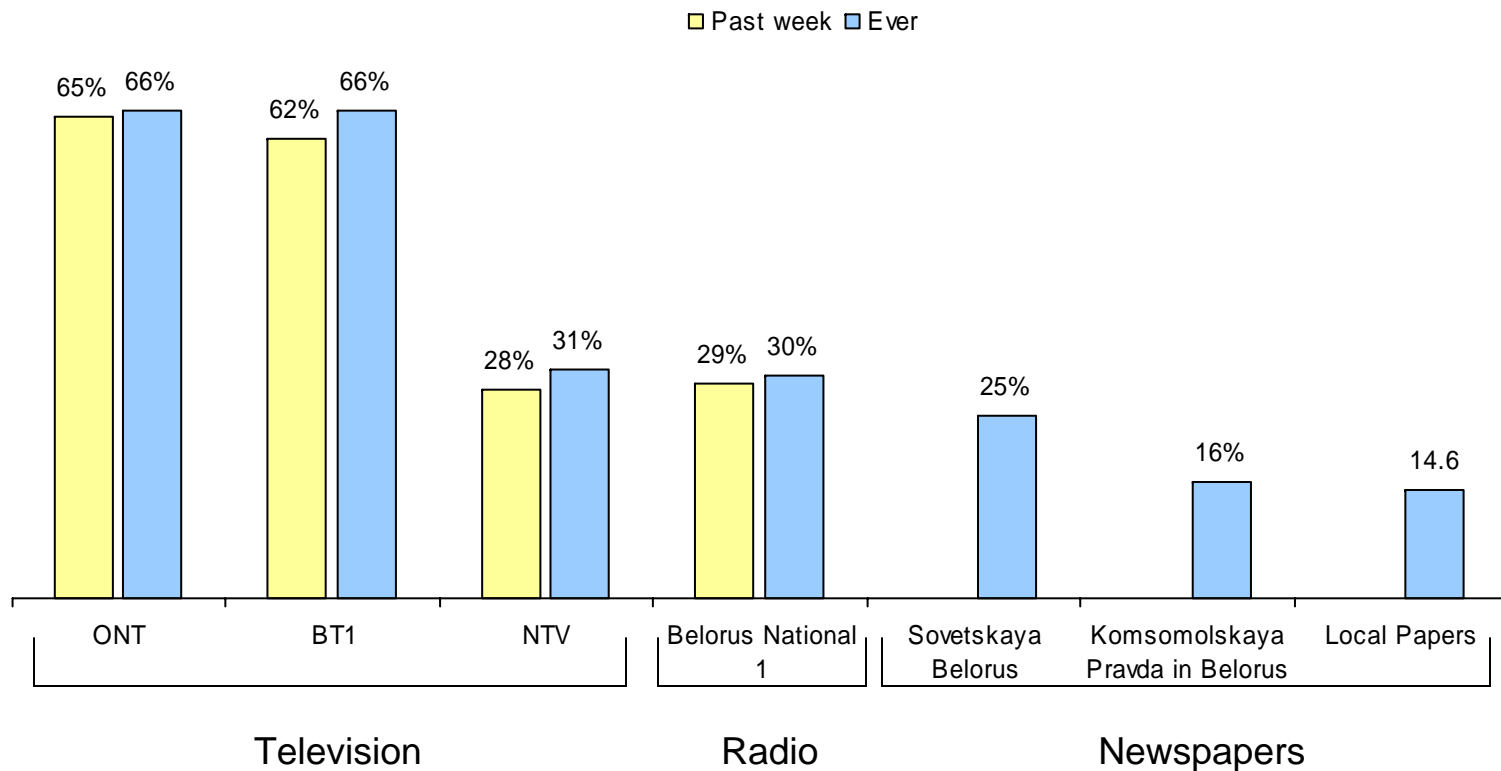


Base: n=1,085 adults [18 and over] in Belarus, 2006

- ◆ While television ranks as the most important media source for staying informed about the election, word of mouth is not far behind.

# National Media Sources are Dominant

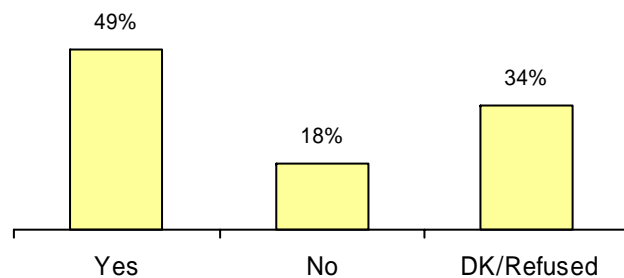
What sources have you been using to stay informed about the election?



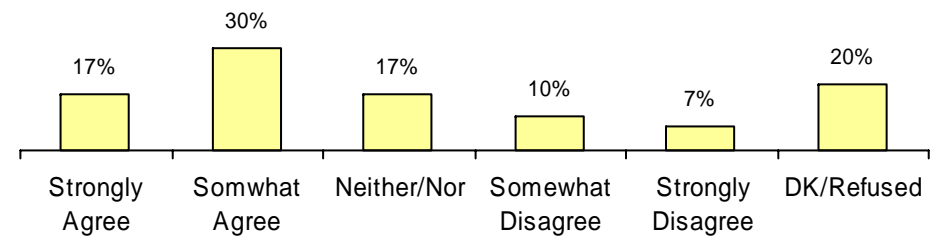
Base: n=1,085 adults [18 and over] in Belarus, 2006

# Most Are Not Sure the Elections Will Be Fair and Many Welcome International Observers

Do you expect for the March 19<sup>th</sup> presidential elections to be free and fair?



Do you agree or disagree that international organizations and observers can help ensure that the elections are held properly?



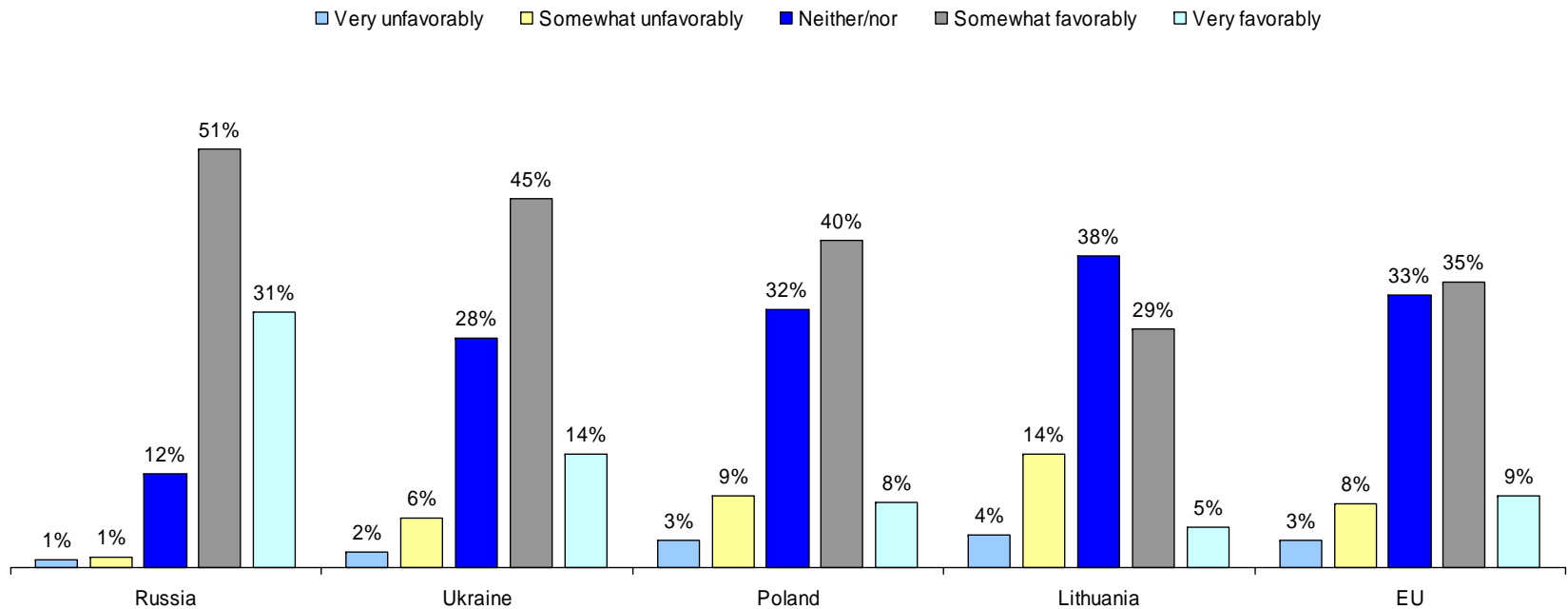
Base: n=1,085 adults [18 and over] in Belarus, 2006



## Views of the Outside World

# Belarusians Remain Favorable Toward Their Neighbors

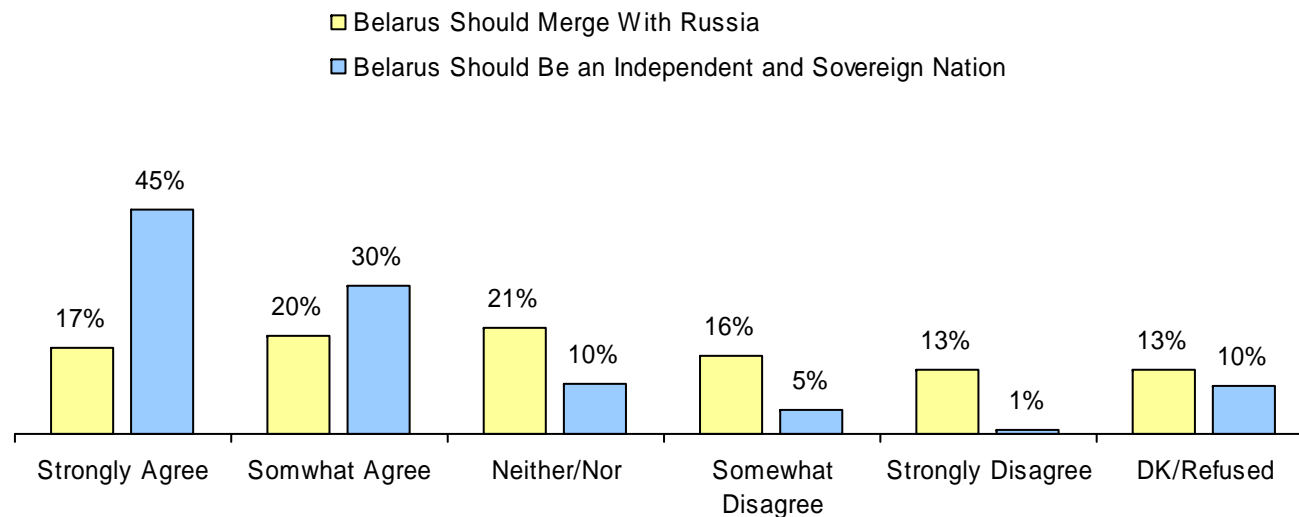
How favorable are you toward the following countries?



Base: n=1,085 adults [18 and over] in Belarus, 2006

# Unclear Opinions About What Belarus' Relationship with Russia Should Be

To what degree do you agree that...



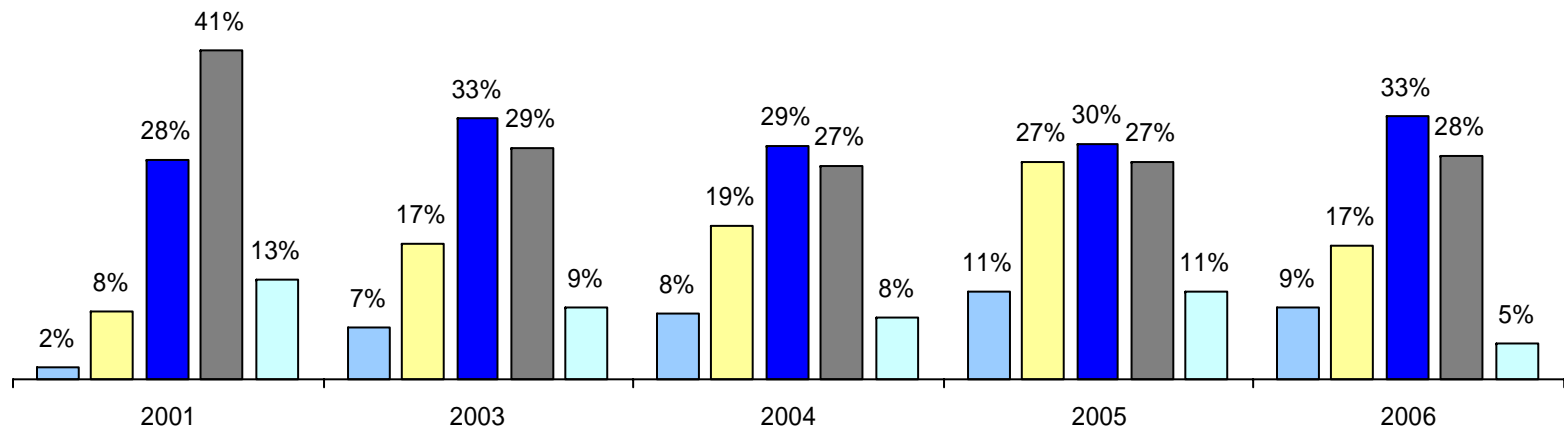
Base: n=2,166 adults [15 and over] in Belarus in September 2005

- ◆ 63.5 percent of those who strongly agree that Belarus should merge with the Russian Federation also strongly believe that Belarus should be an independent and sovereign nation

# Gradual Decrease in Favorability Toward the US Over the Past Five Years

How favorable are you toward the United States?

Very unfavorably   Somewhat unfavorably   Neither/nor   Somewhat favorably   Very favorably



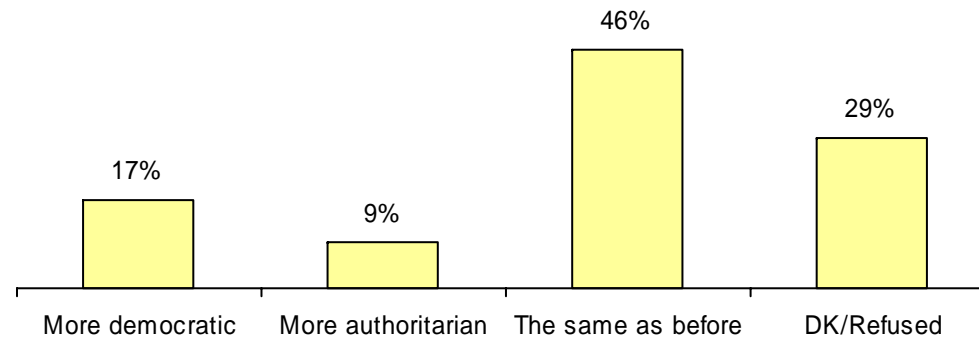
Base: 2006 n = 1,085; 2005 n = 2,166; 2004 n = 2,157; 2003 n = 2,192; 2001 n = 2,190 adults [15 and over] in Belarus



## Outlook Toward the Future

# The Majority Feel Politically the Future Will Not Be More Democratic

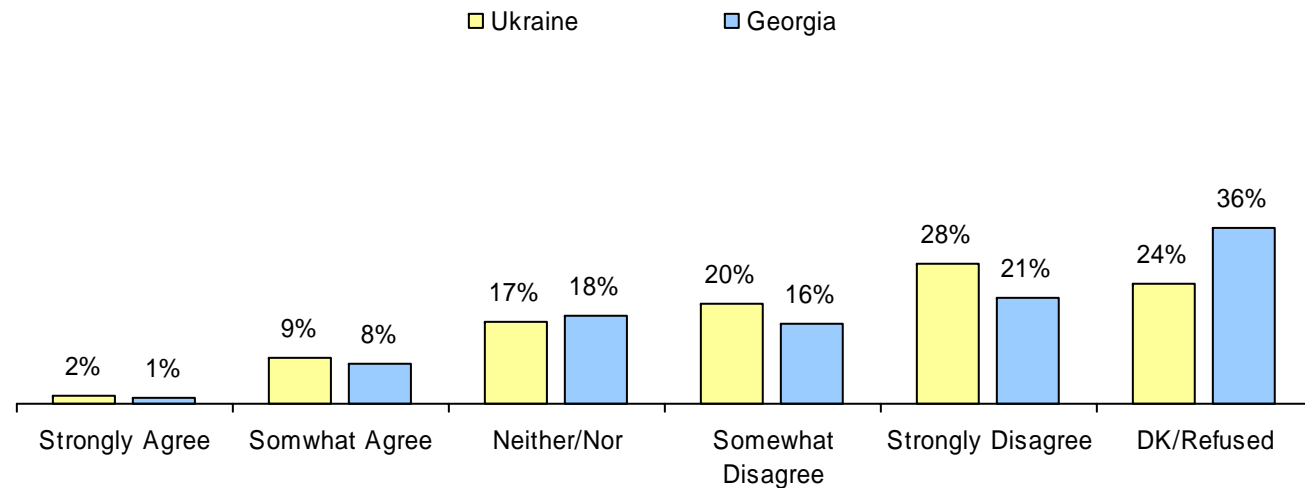
How do you see the political future of Belarus after the elections?



Base: n=1,085 adults [18 and over] in Belarus, 2006

# Most Belarusians Do Not See “Colored” Revolutions as a Positive Development

Do you agree that colored revolutions in the following countries resulted in positive change?



Base: n=1,085 adults [18 and over] in Belarus, 2006

- ◆ This makes them less likely to participate in a similar revolution in Belarus
- ◆ However, the demographic profile of the opposition does indicate political change is possible in the future



## Conclusions

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- ◆ **Lukashenka remains the most popular politician, while gaining less support from educated, urban youth**
- ◆ **Access to independent sources of information has a direct effect on people's views toward the current leadership**
- ◆ **National and regime-friendly sources of information continue to dominate**
- ◆ **The majority of Belarusians are not sure the elections will be free and fair**
- ◆ **Most Belarusians do not believe the country will become more democratic after the elections**
- ◆ **Colored revolution in the near future is unlikely, however change could occur**