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Poroshenko Could Win Ukraine Election in First Round, Poll Says

By Christopher Brennan

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Ukrainian businessman, politician and presidential candidate Petro Poroshenko greets supporters during his election rally in the town of Konotop in northern Ukraine on Thursday.

If Ukraine's presidential election had gone ahead two weeks earlier than planned, candy company owner Petro Poroshenko would have won in the first round, a recent poll shows.

Poroshenko, a parliament member and former trade minister who also owns the Roshen confectionery giant, was the candidate chosen by 33.7 percent of those who took part in a poll by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology.

Thirteen percent said, however, that they won't participate in the May 25 election and 25.4 percent said they still hadn't picked a candidate, meaning Poroshenko was the preferred choice for 54.7 percent of decided voters who took part in the survey, which is enough to win without a run-off.

Former Prime Minister and Fatherland party leader Yulia Tymoshenko ranked second in the poll with 5.9 percent of all respondents saying they would vote for her, while 4.1 percent said they would back self-nominated candidate Serhiy Tihipko, who is a former member of ousted President Viktor Yanukovych's party.

Poroshenko, whose net worth was estimated at $1.3 billion by Forbes earlier this year, enjoys a substantial lead in the institute's poll, but his support varies widely among different areas of Ukraine. The businessman is the number one candidate for 53 percent of voters in western Ukraine, 41.4 percent in central Ukraine, 25.3 percent in the south and 10.5 percent in the east, which has been the site of violence between government forces and pro-Russian separatists in recent weeks.

Despite his support for the Maidan protest movement that led to the creation of what separatists call the current "junta" government in Kiev, Poroshenko still enjoys the highest support of any candidate in eastern Ukraine. However, 32.2 percent of those polled in the turbulent region said they would not participate in the election and 31.5 said they did not know who would get their vote.

The poll was conducted between April 29 and May 11 among 2,022 respondents in 110 Ukrainian towns and cities. The margin of error did not exceed 3.3 percentage points.

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