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Public Attitudes Toward Political life: Electoral Experience Confidence in Leadership and Civic Participation in Armenia

**Thomas Carson, Ph.D., IFES Survey Specialist
Gevork Pogolian, President, Armenian Sociological Association**

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International Foundation for Election Systems

1101 15th STREET, N.W. • THIRD FLOOR • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005 • (202) 828-8507 • FAX (202) 452-0804

***Public Attitudes Toward Political life:
Electoral Experience, Confidence in Leadership and Civic Participation in Armenia***

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Table of Contents	1
I. Summary of Key Findings	2
II. Attitudes Toward Elections and Electoral Behavior	5
A. Participation in Elections	5
B. Assessments of the Electoral Process	11
C. Knowledge of Elections	15
D. Voter Apathy	19
III. Attitudes Toward Institutions, Leadership and the Political Situation	21
A. The State and Meaning of Democracy in Armenia Today	21
B. Confidence in Leadership	24
C. Representation and Constituency	28
D. Corruption	31
IV. Civic Participation and the Role of Non-Governmental Organizations	35
A. Knowledge of and Membership in NGOs	35
B. Attitudes Toward Participation in NGOs	38
C. The Role of NGOs in Social and Political Life in Armenia	41
V. Methodological Notes	43
Appendix One. Focus Group Discussion Guide	Appendix 1
Appendix Two. Self-Completed Questionnaire	Appendix 2

I. Summary of Key Findings

Between May 15 - 19, 2000 the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) commissioned a series of focus group sessions (eight in total) to be carried out across Armenia. These focus groups were conducted to find out how ordinary Armenians feel about their leaders and institutions, their confidence in the electoral process, and their overall perceptions of the political and economic situation in Armenia today. While the findings from this research project cannot be said to be scientifically representative of the adult population of Armenia, they do provide important insights into the attitudes and opinions of Armenians of different ages and education, and from different locations. These insights can help aid organizations in identifying areas of greatest concern and need in the process of democratic development in Armenia.

The group sessions were organized to cover the main concentration of voters, and areas with lower rates of voter participation in the elections. Overall, four sessions were conducted in Yerevan, one in Syunik (Kappan), one in Tavush (Idjevan), one in Ararat (Artashat), and one in Kotayk (Abovian). Eighty (80) participants were recruited for these sessions. Another eight (8) participants took part in a pilot session used to develop the materials. Trained moderators conducted each session, which were video-taped. This research produced video-tapes of the sessions, Armenian transcripts, extensive English notes, and data bases created from self-completed questionnaires filled out by participants before the sessions began. A supplementary interview was carried out May 25, 2000 in three districts (15 precincts) on Election Day to verify the accuracy of the electoral lists.

The research data show that the overwhelming concern of Armenians today is to take care of themselves and their families under the difficult conditions in which most Armenians live. Since Armenian independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, limited work and consistent unemployment has worn down the exuberant spirit Armenians displayed in the early days of independence. The war in Karabakh has also brought its hardships to ordinary Armenians. People's concerns now seem to be focused on the economy and absence of work. In addition to economic collapse and the trauma due to a drawn-out war, Armenians also have had to put up with political upheaval, high-level assassinations, and terrorist acts in the last few years.

The data from the focus groups shows that this combination of political and economic uncertainty weighs heavily upon ordinary Armenians and diminishes hopes for the future. Indeed, a recent USAID survey conducted in 1999 shows that the economic performance of the past few years has even led a majority of Armenians to consider a return to pre-independence times. This survey shows that a majority (54%) would prefer the "economic security we had in Soviet times" over the freedoms of today. The decision to become an independent state, while vital to Armenians, is second-guessed by many, if the current malaise is the result of this decision. Many believe that it is.

These hardships also shape Armenians' understanding and desire for democracy. To many of the participants in the focus groups, democracy still primarily means the possibility to have limited civil freedoms. But this is only the positive meaning, which is understood by the concept of "democracy." The data shows that a majority of associations that democracy evokes tend to be negative in nature. Dissatisfaction caused by bad economic conditions, unemployment, and very

low standards of living is connected in the ordinary consciousness with the democratic reforms of recent years. The result is "the devaluation" of democratic values and the idea of democracy in public consciousness. Participants also expressed the view that "democracy" as it is understood in western terms does not exist in Armenia. Indeed, some participants stated that such a concept does not correspond to the Armenian mentality.

In the discussions, Armenians juxtaposed events that would not be connected together in the thinking of western observers. It is difficult for people outside Armenia to understand the current mentality in Armenia without an appreciation of how people view recent history. Many Armenians speak of the height of their position during the last days of the communist system. They speak of these days as something taken from them. Many would reverse the vote for independence in the early 1990s if they could have foreseen their current position from that time. No one refers to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and collapse of Russian economic power when evaluating Armenia's current position. Comparison is with the past, not current reality.

In the context of difficult personal conditions, many participants in the focus groups tolerate corruption as a fact of life today. Estimates on the extent of corruption vary, but most believe it permeates all aspects of public life. Small bribes are frequently given to ensure entrance to education, jobs, to receive important papers and exit visas. A husband of one participant needed to pay bribes to pass his final exams to become a police officer. Armenians accept that nearly everyone would take a bribe if they were in a position to do so. Armenians do not believe this is correct, or even good for them. They simply accept it as a necessary strategy for survival in everyday life. A participant ironically commented that corruption may disappear in the future because there will be no one left to pay the bribes. Another commented that no one has money left to support the corruption here today. Many perceive that, somehow, the current state cannot continue. They just do not see solutions themselves.

The financial condition also affects Armenians' outlook toward the elections. Many participants state that people do not vote because their concern is on everyday survival. Others also believe that rural people are too busy working in the fields and ensuring food for their families to go and vote during key periods in the agricultural cycle.

Harsh conditions are at best a partial explanation why many Armenians do not participate in elections. IFES listened to over 80 persons recruited for focus group sessions for this research. Most of them (three out of four), do not regularly vote in elections. The principal reason for not voting, stated by these participants, was not economic conditions. The hardness of life in Armenia is only the context, not the cause. The main reason many do not participate in elections is the belief that their vote does not count. Participants in these sessions unanimously stated that the results of elections are decided "on higher levels." So why should they vote? As proof of this claim, participants pointed to the unexpected (and popularly rejected) results of the 1996 and 1998 Presidential elections.

Hand-in-hand with the sense of alienation and mistrust of elections is a heightened politicization of the Armenian electorate. Many more are interested in politics than found in earlier surveys. This increase in political interest may seem at odds with the loss of efficacy in the voting process many report. However, the increased interest toward politics among the

population has an unhealthy character. Unfortunately, this increased interest toward politics is based on the deep disappointment, dissatisfaction toward authorities, political alienation, and full distrust of authorities. These disappointments seem to have left the Armenians in the mood for punishment and requital of those who are responsible for the country's current predicaments. This leads to the "unhealthy" interest that participants express in the scandals and intrigues their leaders and institutions.

The dismal outlook many have and publicly express make all the more remarkable those who are committed and optimistic. Such people were present in the focus group sessions. These people do believe that elections are organized and run more efficiently these last years in Armenia. All of the participants agree that NGOs are engaging the electorate.. Many are uncertain about how they differ from previous (and more extensive) state-supported organizations. Examples were given frequently about the useful work done by some of them. However, few of the participants expressed a desire to join them unless they could earn reasonable money. Women in these sessions were more interested in these opportunities than the men. There was a positive sense expressed within the groups that people in NGOs work for reasons other than for the money or personal ambition. Some even point to political candidates and parties that are promising to them. Many also believe that the President looks out for their interests, and that important work is being done by some of the local governments and leaders. However, these statements are often followed with disclaimers that ominous forces hinder or will stop such actions from succeeding. Armenians are sympathetic to those who do not succeed.

This report makes extensive use of results from the 1999 USAID national survey. Conducted six months before the focus groups, the national survey extends the analyses and findings of this report to the entire population. Results from an earlier IFES Survey of Electoral Officials conducted in 1998 are also utilized. Further details regarding this data can be found in Section V, Methodology.

In brief, key findings from this research are:

- *Citizens believe elections have improved in recent years in the way they are technically managed and carried out according to participants.*
- *Citizens believe that elections are still manipulated and that political actors high in the system alter the results. They believe that International Observers are not capable of observing this. This is the main reason for voter apathy.*
- *The electorate is compelled toward the political events and drama that surrounds them. This "participation" is a reaction to the negative aspects of the political life in Armenia.*
- *Corruption is an accepted part of life in Armenia that touches everyone. Few expect their authorities will do something except benefit from it. Many would do the same if they could.*
- *Nearly everyone knows that NGOs are working in society. Many do not think they will be able to achieve much. However, few questioned the credibility of those involved in them.*

II. Attitudes towards Elections and Electoral Behavior

A. Participation in Elections

Is there a decline in the percentage of the population that goes to vote in elections in Armenia? The answer depends on which level of election examined. There are two sources of data about participation in elections that can be drawn upon to answer this question: statistics provided by the Central Election Commission and public opinion surveys. Central Election Committee (CEC) statistics report the percentage turnout for each of the national elections as:¹

- 55.6% voted in the 1995 Parliamentary elections
- 60.3% voted in the 1996 Presidential elections
- 63.0% voted in the 1998 first round Presidential elections
- 68.1% voted in the 1998 second around Presidential elections
- 51.7% voted in the 1999 Parliamentary by-elections

Over half the electorate voted in each of the last four national elections. These percentages may actually underestimate the true turnout. The participation rates are calculated from the number of registered voters. Many people believe the electoral lists inflate the actual number of people eligible to vote in elections because an increasingly large number of Armenians are leaving the country. Therefore, the percentage of voters actually in Armenia who voted is probably higher than indicated, especially in recent years.

A second source of data about participation in elections is the self-reported behavior of voting-age adults from national public opinion surveys. According to this survey, turnout for recent national elections has been relatively high, while local elections have much lower levels of participation. The results of the USAID 1999 survey show that 65% [621] of respondents took an active part in elections at all levels.² According to the survey, 76% of respondents took part in the 1998 Presidential elections; 69.5% took part in the 1999 Parliamentary elections; 48.2% in the 1996 municipal/local elections; and 32.9% in the 1999 municipal/local elections. (See Figure 1).

¹ The CEC does not keep statistics for the local elections. These are compiled separately by each of the Regional Election Committees.

² Comparing the survey data with the official statistics on participation in elections, shows that the self-reports are somewhat exaggerated. That is the result of the effect of interaction between interviewer and respondent during the survey. Answering the questions about participation in different elections, respondents, as a rule, give more positive answers, than negative ones. Their memory does not always coincide with their actual electoral behavior. However, the official statistics may be biased as well due to the uncertainty concerning the real size of the electorate. More accurate numbers may be in-between the two sets of figures.

**Figure 1. Participation in the Elections,
Self-Reported, USAID 1999 Survey**

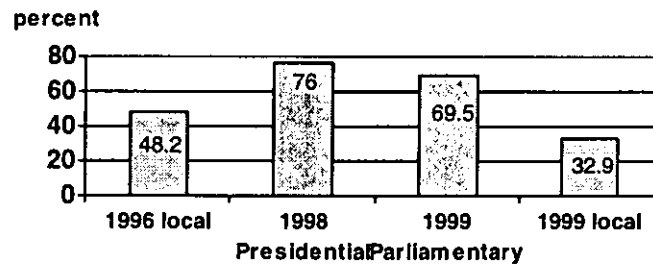


Table 1A lists the characteristics of those who claim to have voted in the recent elections. The 1999 USAID data uses retrospective questions about voting behavior in the past. Those too young to vote in former elections have been eliminated from the corresponding analysis. For example, respondents who were 20 years of age at the time of the survey could not have voted in the 1996 Presidential elections, and they have been eliminated from the analyses.

The participation among men is somewhat higher (74.5%), than among women (65%). Adults groups are more active (80% - 81%) than youth in the 18-30 year age category (66.3%).

The general pattern in *national elections* is that turnout increases steadily with age. In the 1998 Presidential election, 70% of the 18 - 24 year-olds who were old enough to vote in that election did, compared to 80% of those 56 years of age and above. The highest rates of turnout are among the most educated. In 1998, 86% of those with the highest levels of education claim to have voted. In the 1999 Parliamentary elections, 76% of those with the highest levels of education voted. A slightly lower percent of the other age groups turn out to vote than this. (Respondents who did not finish secondary school also report a high level of participation; however, the sample size is too small for this group to ensure these figures are accurate, or the result of sampling error.)

Participation in elections is higher in some of the regions than in Yerevan and other regions. Syunik and Gegharkunik tend to have high rates of participation. Over 90% of eligible respondents from both regions claim to have voted in the 1998 Presidential election. In Syunik, 82% claim to have voted in the 1999 Parliamentary elections, compared to 90% for Gegharkunik.

In contrast, only 56% of respondents from Vayots Dzor claim to have voted in the 1998 Presidential election. For Yerevan, 74% said they voted. For the 1999 Parliamentary elections, 61% from Yerevan claim to have voted. Problems with participation are more apparent for the local elections than the national.

Local Elections. Low rates of participation are a clear problem in local elections. According to self-reports, only 33% went to vote in the 1999 local elections. This is a decrease from 1996, in that 52% claimed to have voted in the 1996 local elections.

The oldest adults are much less likely to vote in the local elections than in the national elections. For the 1996 local elections, 50% of those 56 years of age and above claim to have voted. The youngest respondents are even less likely to vote. Only 35% of those under 25 years of age who were old enough to vote in the 1996 local elections did so. The lowest educational groups are also less likely to vote in local elections than national. Only 60% of the least educated, compared to 53% of the highest educated, claim to have voted in the 1996 local elections. These results are listed in Table 1.

These tendencies are reflected among the participants in the focus group sessions. Participants were selected for the groups by their voting behavior. Six groups consisted of 'non-voters.' These participants were selected because they had voted in less than three national elections since 1991. Many had voted in some of the elections. Two groups consisted of 'voters,' participants who had voted in at least three national elections since 1991, and in at least one of the local elections during this time period. Table 2 shows their participation in elections.

Groups 1 (Yerevan males 18 – 24) and 3 (Kappan females 41 – 55) consisted of voters. Most of them voted in elections they were eligible for. The Yerevan males were too young to vote before the 1996 elections. All of them started this year by voting in the 1996 Presidential Election. Only one voted in the 1998 Parliamentary Election, but all of them again voted in the 1998 Presidential Election. In 1999, 9 out of 10 voted in the Parliamentary By-Elections. Their participation is less in the local elections. Only 3 out of 10 voted in the 1996 local elections. They all voted in the presidential election of that year. In 1999, 5 voted.

In Kappan, 9 out of 10 of the women voted in the 1991 Presidential Election. (One claimed she was not there at that time.) All the Kappan female participants voted in the following national elections, and all voted in the 1996 and 1998 local elections. The Kappan group was the most vocal and politicized session held in this study. Many of the females in this group had served on Regional Election Commissions. Several worked in political parties.

Participation in elections is much lower for the other groups, which is the reason they were recruited for the sessions. In recent years, the oldest participants were least likely to have voted (Group 4, Abovian). However, 6 out of 10 of them had voted in the Presidential Election in 1991. Afterwards, their participation in elections declined. Two of them had voted in the 1999 Parliamentary Election. Other non-voters are more likely to vote in the presidential elections rather than the parliamentary. They are least likely to vote in the local elections.

Something else is shown in Tables 2A and 2B. The participation counts come from the self-administered questionnaire. Participation in elections was also discussed in the group sessions. At that time, participants were asked which elections they had voted in. This number is given in [] in Table 2A. (Local elections were not discussed in the group sessions.) As shown, there is a tendency for more people to claim to have voted during the group discussion, than were willing to mark on their questionnaire before the discussion. Even for non-voters, there appears to be some internal pressure that they should vote.

Table 1A. Self-Reported Participation in Elections: Republic of Armenia National Elections

	Vote in Presidential Election 1998						Total		Vote in Parliamentary Election 1999						Total	
	Yes		No		DK/NA		%	#	yes		no		DK/NA		%	#
	%	#	%	#	%	#			%	#	%	#	%	#		
Age																
20 – 24	70.5	98	28.8	40	71.9%	1	14.6%	139	63.3	107	36.7	62	0.0%		17.2%	169
25 – 40	79.2	278	20.5	72	28.5%	1	36.9%	351	67.8	238	32.2	113	0.0%		35.8%	351
41 – 55	79.5	209	20.5	54	0.0%		27.7%	263	74.9	197	24.7	65	38.0%	1	26.8%	263
56+	82.7	163	15.7	31	152.3%	3	20.7%	197	74.1	146	25.4	50	50.8%	1	20.1%	197
Total	78.7	748	20.7	197	52.6%	5	100.0%	950	70.2	688	29.6	290	20.4%	2	100.0%	980
Education																
Primary	80.0	8	20.0	2	0.0%		1.1%	10	80.0	8	20.0	2	0.0%		1.0%	10
incomplete secondary	73.2	52	25.4	18	140.8%	1	7.5%	71	59.2	42	40.8	29	0.0%		7.2%	71
Secondary	75.9	252	23.8	79	30.1%	1	34.9%	332	66.0	229	33.4	116	57.6%	2	35.4%	347
secondary special	79.9	246	19.2	59	97.4%	3	32.4%	308	72.8	227	27.2	85	0.0%		31.8%	312
higher incomplete	76.5	52	23.5	16	0.0%		7.2%	68	74.7	59	25.3	20	0.0%		8.1%	79
Higher	85.7	138	14.3	23	0.0%		16.9%	161	76.4	123	23.6	38	0.0%		16.4%	161
Total	78.7	748	20.7	197	52.6%	5	100.0%	950	70.2	688	29.6	290	20.4%	2	100.0%	980
Gender																
Male	80.4	369	19.0	87	65.4%	3	48.3%	459	75.0	351	24.8	116	21.4%	1	47.8%	468
Female	77.2	379	22.4	110	40.7%	2	51.7%	491	65.8	337	34.0	174	19.5%	1	52.2%	512
Total	78.7	748	20.7	197	52.6%	5	100.0%	950	70.2	688	29.6	290	20.4%	2	100.0%	980
Region (Marz)																
Yerevan	74.3	231	25.1	78	64.3%	2	32.7%	311	61.4	199	38.0	123	61.7%	2	33.1%	324
Shirak	80.0	76	18.9	18	105.3%	1	10.0%	95	75.8	72	24.2	23	0.0%		9.7%	95
Lori	78.5	73	21.5	20	0.0%		9.8%	93	71.4	70	28.6	28	0.0%		10.0%	98
Tavush	82.1	32	15.4	6	256.4%	1	4.1%	39	80.0	32	20.0	8	0.0%		4.1%	40
Aragatzotn	87.5	35	12.5	5	0.0%		4.2%	40	83.3	35	16.7	7	0.0%		4.3%	42
Kotayk	75.6	65	24.4	21	0.0%		9.1%	86	63.6	56	36.4	32	0.0%		9.0%	88
Gegharkunik	92.9	65	7.1	5	0.0%		7.4%	70	90.3	65	9.7	7	0.0%		7.3%	72
Armavir	75.9	63	24.1	20	0.0%		8.7%	83	69.0	58	31.0	26	0.0%		8.6%	84
Ararat	81.1	60	17.6	13	135.1%	1	7.8%	74	68.4	52	31.6	24	0.0%		7.8%	76
Vayots Dzor	56.3	9	43.8	7	0.0%		1.7%	16	76.5	13	23.5	4	0.0%		1.7%	17
Syunik	90.7	39	9.3	4	0.0%		4.5%	43	81.8	36	18.2	8	0.0%		4.5%	44
Total	78.7	748	20.7	197	52.6%	5	100.0%	950	70.2	688	29.6	290	20.4%	2	100.0%	980

Table 1B. Self-Reported Participation in Elections: Republic of Armenia Local Elections

	Vote in Local Elections 1996						Total		Vote in Local Elections 1999						Total	
	Yes		No		DK/NA		%	#	yes		no		DK/NA		%	#
	%	#	%	#	%	#			%	#	%	#				
Age																
20 - 24	34.6	27	55.1	43	10.3	8	8.8%	78	31.4	53	68.6	116	0.0%		17.2%	169
25 - 40	52.4	184	35.9	126	11.7	41	39.5%	351	32.5	114	67.5	237	0.0%		35.8%	351
41 - 55	58.9	155	31.9	84	9.1	24	29.6%	263	32.3	85	66.9	176	76.0%	2	26.8%	263
56+	50.3	99	35.0	69	14.7	29	22.2%	197	36.0	71	63.5	125	50.8%	1	20.1%	197
Total	52.3	465	36.2	322	11.5	102	100.0%	889	33.0	323	66.7	654	30.6%	3	100.0%	980
Education																
primary	60.0	6	40.0	4	0.0		1.1%	10	10.0	1	90.0	9	0.0%		1.0%	10
incomplete secondary	42.0	29	46.4	32	11.6	8	7.8%	69	26.8	19	71.8	51	140.8%	1	7.2%	71
secondary	46.5	139	40.8	122	12.7	38	33.6%	299	29.7	103	70.3	244	0.0%		35.4%	347
secondary special	60.6	183	29.8	90	9.6	29	34.0%	302	35.3	110	64.7	202	0.0%		31.8%	312
higher incomplete	48.1	25	38.5	20	13.5	7	5.8%	52	41.8	33	58.2	46	0.0%		8.1%	79
higher	52.9	83	34.4	54	12.7	20	17.7%	157	35.4	57	63.4	102	124.2%	2	16.4%	161
Total	52.3	465	36.2	322	11.5	102	100.0%	889	33.0	323	66.7	654	30.6%	3	100.0%	980
Gender																
male	55.3	239	33.6	145	11.1	48	48.6%	432	32.5	152	67.1	314	42.7%	2	47.8%	468
female	49.5	226	38.7	177	11.8	54	51.4%	457	33.4	171	66.4	340	19.5%	1	52.2%	512
Total	52.3	465	36.2	322	11.5	102	100.0%	889	33.0	323	66.7	654	30.6%	3	100.0%	980
Region (Marz)																
Yerevan	40.5	118	40.5	118	18.9	55	32.7%	291	72.2	234	27.8	90	0.0%		33.1%	324
Shirak	33.7	30	53.9	48	12.4	11	10.0%	89	24.2	23	75.8	72	0.0%		9.7%	95
Lori	66.3	57	33.7	29	0.0		9.7%	86	23.5	23	75.5	74	102.0%	1	10.0%	98
Tavush	86.1	31	11.1	4	2.8	1	4.0%	36	30.0	12	67.5	27	250.0%	1	4.1%	40
Aragatzotn	80.6	29	19.4	7	0.0		4.0%	36	4.8	2	95.2	40	0.0%		4.3%	42
Kotayk	63.0	51	34.6	28	2.5	2	9.1%	81	15.9	14	84.1	74	0.0%		9.0%	88
Gegharkunik	75.4	49	18.5	12	6.2	4	7.3%	65	12.5	9	87.5	63	0.0%		7.3%	72
Armavir	26.3	21	47.5	38	26.3	21	9.0%	80	4.8	4	95.2	80	0.0%		8.6%	84
Ararat	56.7	38	32.8	22	10.4	7	7.5%	67	2.6	2	96.1	73	131.6%	1	7.8%	76
Vayots Dzor	43.8	7	50.0	8	6.3	1	1.8%	16	0.0		100.0	17	0.0%		1.7%	17
Syunik	81.0	34	19.0	8	0.0		4.7%	42	0.0		100.0	44	0.0%		4.5%	44
Total	52.3	465	36.2	322	11.5	102	100.0%	889	33.0	323	66.7	654	30.6%	3	100.0%	980

Table 2A. Focus Group Participants, Participation in Elections
Number who voted: Self-administered questionnaire and [verbal report]
Number who voted: Self-administered questionnaire (continued)

FGD Session #	Description of Participants	1996 Local Election # Voted *	1999 Local Election # Voted
1: Yerevan [10 participants]	males 18 – 24 Voters	3	5
2: Yerevan [10 participants]	females 25 – 40 non-voters	0	0
3: Kappan [10 participants]	females 41 – 55 Voters	10	10
4: Abovian [10 participants]	mixed male/female 56+, non-voters	0	1
5: Yerevan [10 participants]	females 18 – 24 non-voters	0	1
6: Artashat [10 participants]	males 25 – 40 non-voters	1	3
7: Yerevan [10 participants]	females 41 – 55 non-voters	0	0
8: Ijevan [10 participants]	females 18 – 24 non-voters	0	1

B. Assessments of the Electoral Process

Armenians have mixed opinions about their elections. Nearly half of the participants in the group sessions believe that the elections have gotten worse since the 1998 Presidential election, which many of them criticize. In total, 29 out of 63 participants who do not regularly vote believe elections are worse since 1998, with 6 out of 17 participants who regularly vote agreeing. Many believe that the elections are the same: 26 out of 63 non-voters vs. 10 out of 17 voters. Oddly, 8 of the non-voters vs. only 1 voter say that elections are better now. These answers are responses to a self-completed questionnaire given before the group discussions.

We asked participants in the self-completed questionnaire about the central problems that remain with elections in Armenia. Voters point to the authorities: 6 mentioned the "change of authorities" and 4 indicated the "pressure on the people from the authorities." Most of the non-voters just stated that the elections are "unfair". Other problems mentioned by non-voters are "lack of confidence" [4], a lack in the field of those offered as candidates [2], "improvements in people's conditions" [3], "apathy" [2], and the "level of social consciousness" [1]. Only 1 non-voter criticized the organization of the elections, and 3 mentioned problems with the electoral lists.

People evaluate the elections on two dimensions: technical and political. These dimensions are shown in answers to the self-completed questionnaire. Two themes spontaneously emerged in the group discussions. Participants from different regions referred to both dimensions of elections. While they praise the technical aspect, they condemn the political. Concerning the 1998 Presidential elections, participants stated:

It was an unfair election, but it was well organized.

... well organized, but the head of office was in favor of one [of the candidates] and he forced us to vote the same way.

Kappan, females 41 – 55, voters

People separate the mechanical process of voting from the political outcome of an election.

I think that the appearance, the formal part, is getting better. And we got used to the unfair things that were being done.

Yerevan, female 41 – 55, non-voter

People believe that there has been much progress and improvement over the years in the organization of elections. Many participants in the group sessions stated that the elections were carried out on a higher professional level. More people are aware of the process of voting, and better information is now available. Even the electoral lists are much better than they once were. On the technical level, elections in Armenia have improved steadily over the years.

One reason for this is the amount of attention given to elections in Armenia. There has been much international assistance toward improving the technical aspects of elections. International

organizations have focused technical assistance and human resources on the election process in all aspects including voter registry assessment, rudimentary voter list computerizations, voter education, election official training, observer training and vote results tabulation assistance.

The political aspects of elections, however, have not changed as much. Many adults are highly critical of the way the results of elections are calculated and decided on the "higher levels."

The technical side is improved, but not the political side. In sum, international experts are there, and nothing takes place. Everything was organized normally and in their district observers made one to two comments.

Kappan, female 41 – 55, voter

The formal organization is OK. But, unfortunately we cannot say the same for the transparency of the elections. There are problems concerning the election results.

Yerevan, female 18 – 24, non-voter

Technical assessment. People know the procedures for voting. Over 60% of adults [621] reported they were at least "somewhat prepared" for the elections in the 1999 survey. Participants in the group sessions also believe that many of the former problems in elections have been resolved over time.³

I think in comparison they were fairer. I can see improvement since the earlier elections. I think people should go beforehand to check if their names are on the list and then they should go to court to get their names on the list for voting.

Idjevan, female 18 – 25, non-voter

I think at the election everything was fair. People not on the lists went to the central committee to get on the lists.

Kappan, female 41 – 55, voter

For this reason, elections can be seen as one sign of improvement in Armenia.

I didn't feel any pressure, personally, I always voted for the person I wanted. The last elections, I was a little disappointed, but I still had hope. During 1999 elections I had hope and confidence that the Alliance would make changes and there was a lot of hope connected with them.

Yerevan, female 41 – 55, non-voter

³ In the self-completed questionnaire, 51 out of 80 (64%) participants stated that voters did not understand the process well enough to vote in the 1996 local elections. The estimated turnout from self-reported data (USAID 1999 survey) shows that only 33% nationally may have turned out to vote. The connection between the two is unclear, but suggestive.

Of course, the last two elections were conducted better than earlier ones. Of course, we didn't have transparent boxes and we couldn't be sure that elections on the whole were fair and transparent.

Artashat, male 25 – 40, non-voter

Data collected recently for the May 2000 Parliamentary by-elections support a claim that elections have improved significantly. IFES commissioned nearly 400 surveys to be completed in three districts (15 precincts) in Yerevan among voters leaving the polling station. Voters were asked if their names were listed correctly on the electoral list. 98% replied that it was. Those whose name was not on the list were asked if they knew they could appeal to have their name included. Most of them did know this.

Political assessment. Elections have noticeably improved over the years, yet many Armenians do not vote. Why? The main reason is a clear lack of confidence that their vote counts. Most adults in Armenia do not believe that elections accurately reflect the intentions of voters. Respondents were asked if “Armenian elections reflect the wishes of most citizens” in the 1999 survey. Over half (59% [593]) disagree with this statement. Perhaps for this reason, 65% [654] of respondents disagreed that “voting gives people influence” in the same survey.

A striking statement of this attitude is found in results from the 1998 IFES Survey of Election Officials. 37% of the election officials interviewed for this survey “disagreed very much” with the statement that voting gives people influence. Another 17% “disagreed somewhat.” In answers to the self-completed questionnaire for the focus group sessions, 38 out of 63 non-voters and 13 out of 17 voters disagreed with this statement.

This is where the distrust toward elections originates as way to influence the process of decision-making and forming of political authority in the country. It is one more sign of deep political alienation among the population, which has a long history from its recent roots in 1992 and 1993. The population is drawn away, alienated from the political processes taking place in the country, and does not feel it participates in it, even though they vote in national elections.

The group sessions provide a consistent picture of this lack of efficacy in the power of the vote. The perception that the elections are not free and fair, and that “someone” fixes the final results, was repeated across all the groups. This perception seems to originate from the 1996 and 1998 Presidential elections. One female participant summarized feelings many shared about the 1996 elections:

At that time a lot of people had a desire to participate and I think more than 70% voted because a lot of people wanted to choose Manuokian. And the hope of the people during these elections was largely broken, when the Army was raised against the population. The apathy and disappointment began with this election.

Yerevan, female 41 – 55, non-voter

Concerning the 1998 elections, participants stated:

I didn't participate, but I have heard that the organization was well [arranged], but the next day everyone was saying that this was a dishonest election and the results changed. In reality, Demirchian was elected, but the next day Kocharian was announced.

My friends were observers and said that in some places the electricity went off, and at that time ballots were stuffed into the box.

Yerevan, females 25 – 40, non-voters

This is the main reason Armenians are skeptical about the power of voting. Many repeated the statement that the candidate they would cast their ballots for, will not be elected. So why vote? The group participants did not believe much could be done to change this. They seem to accept that this is the nature of Armenia today. They also imply that the international community cannot do much to change this.

I don't think our elections are being conducted the way they are in Europe and other countries.

I have to say the idea of matching international standards is wrong. Our mentality is different. We have special traits that cannot be compared to other nations.

Yerevan, females 18 – 24, non-voters

About the international observers, this is a formality. We show them what we want them to see. There exists a national mentality, and the international community cannot understand it. At least they need two years to understand the Armenian mentality. If no one is holding the hand of the voter, it is considered normal elections, which is pedantic American mentality. It is possible to cope with the standards and become a member of the Council of Europe.

Yerevan, male 18 – 24, voter

They usually say that the elections were well organized, honest. There are a lot of things the international community cannot see.

Yerevan, female 25 – 40, non-voter

People believe the elections are not fair. Many say the results are arranged before the voting. Participants were asked how they believe this is happening, and they stated that this is done through falsification of the electoral lists and the buying of votes.

It is not a democracy, people are immigrating. The falsification of people themselves is taking place. If you go to the street and ask somebody, almost everyone thinks there is no democracy in Armenia.

Many of our people live in many parts out of the country. They were registered, but out of the country. And there were people not living in Yerevan who were on the list. This list should be displayed one week before elections to see if they are on the list or not. I live in Abovian and I am registered in this town. If I was not on list, where would I go to vote. There were many people not on the list, too many cases. Those who I know, 7 out of 20 were not on lists.

I consider the 1996 elections unfair and not correct. Illegal. I can say that people simply buy ordinary people.

Abovian mixed male/female 56 years and older, non-voters

The sense that elections are not fair permeated the sessions. In the self-completed questionnaires for the group sessions, 37 out of 63 non-voters "completely disagreed" with the statement: *In my opinion, elections are conducted as efficiently and as fairly as is possible here in Armenia.* Another 14 out of 63 non-voters "somewhat disagreed" with this statement. It is a good sign that 12 non-voters and 8 out of 17 voters "somewhat or completely agreed" with the statement. Not everyone is pessimistic.

No, I think that the elections of 1999 were a bit better. We had leaders, and these were chosen. Not much of a difference, but a slight positive change I saw.

Yerevan male 18 – 24, voter

C. Knowledge of Elections

Participants were asked during the group sessions about their memories of previous elections. In the first part of the group discussion, after they completed a questionnaire, participants were asked to recall each of the national elections since the Referendum for Independence in 1991. The main purpose of this was to prompt their memories of the actual events, feelings, and the problems that happened at that time. To do this, they were asked to remember a specific election, and what most people felt at that time. For example, this section started with the recollection of the Referendum for Independence in 1991.

For each election, participants were asked for their estimates of the turnout. This was done to make their memories more vivid. At the end of this section, they were asked them to evaluate the whole series of elections they had just discussed, and to make an assessment of the trend in elections during this time. Anchoring their assessments in discussions about specifics for each election, such as the turnout, was one technique used to increase the quality of their assessments.

Table 3 reproduces participants' assessments of the popular turnout in each election. The dynamic and fluid nature of focus group methodology does not always ensure that each question will get asked as intended. For this reason, in some groups the moderator did not ask these questions.

The degree of consensus about the participation rates in elections is fairly high between group sessions. Most remember that the 1991 Referendum for Independence drew 80% - 90% of the

electorate. Those too young to vote (session 1, 18 – 24 year-old male voters in Yerevan; session 5, 18 – 24 year-old female non-voters in Yerevan; and session 8, 18 – 24 year-old female non-voters in Idjevan) also report that the turnout was near 90% for the Referendum. The only group which departs from this estimate is session 4, 56 year-old and above non-voters in Abovian. Also of interest is the outcome of the Referendum for Independence given by each group. The general pattern is that the groups estimate a high level of support for the referendum. Only the oldest group members, those in session 4, divert from this trend. In the estimate of the oldest group participants, relatively few people supported independence. This is clearly wishful thinking on their part. After the session was over and the research staff was preparing to leave, the camera was still recording. Participants in this group continued to sit and discuss the topics of the session. One old woman looked around, and said, to paraphrase: *now that they are not listening to us, I must say in my opinion, the only way forward is with Russia.*

Session 4 with the oldest participants consistently estimated lower turnout for each election than the other groups. Discounting this, the other groups are in agreement that the 1996 Presidential Election drew a lower turnout averaging 55% - 86%. The 1999 Parliamentary Election is estimated to have drawn only 52% - 68% of the electorate. Not enough of the groups were asked about the 1998 Presidential turnout for comparison.

Comparisons are difficult to make using qualitative data and few participants. Also, not all participants voiced their opinions to the questions, many just indicated agreement with what others said. However, there is no clear difference between the groups of voters (session 1 in Yerevan and 3 in Kappan), and the groups of non-voters. Besides session 4, the oldest participants, there also appears to be no clear difference by gender or age on their estimates. This is quite interesting considering that group members had no advance warning that they would be asked these questions.

Table 3 indicates a general overall agreement about participation in elections, and the outcome of the Referendum for Independence. This indicates a fairly high level of consensus on what is going on in national elections in Armenia. Moderators were instructed to aim toward a group consensus for these questions. If the group averages are taken as an approximation of this consensus, it could be said that the group participants (except session 4) would agree that the approximate electoral turnout was:

81% for the Referendum of Independence
65% for the 1996 Presidential Election
59% for the 1999 Parliamentary Election

The CEC's official statistics for two of these elections are 60.3% for the 1996 Presidential Election and 51.7% for the 1999 Parliamentary Election. As discussed above, there is good reason to believe the turnout was higher than officially reported.

The analysis presented is at best a rough description. It does demonstrate that there is much agreement among Armenians about what has happened recently concerning participation in elections. Also, this agreement mirrors official statistics about these elections. Generally, people (both voters and non-voters) are well informed, or at least in agreement with official reports

concerning the elections. It would be interesting to conduct similar, spontaneous "pop quizzes" among the electorate in other countries to see how well they would fair on "pop quizzes" regarding their country's recent participation in national elections.

**Table 3. Estimated Turnout for National Elections in Armenia
Focus Group Participants**

FGD Session #	1991 Vote for Independence	1991 Outcome	1996 Presidential Election	1998 Presidential Election	1999 Parliamentary Election
	% Voted	% in Favor	% Voted	% Voted	% Voted
1: Yerevan Males 18 - 24 Voters [10 participants]	80%-1 pers. 90%-1 pers. 95%-1 pers.	95%-3 pers.	50-60%-2 pers. 60% -1 pers. 60-70%-1 pers. 70% -2 pers.		50% -1 pers. 50%+ -1 pers. 50-60%-1 pers. 60% -1 pers. 60-70%-1 pers. 90% -1 pers.
<i>Average</i>	88%	95%	62%		62%
2: Yerevan Females 25 - 40 Non-voters [10 participants]	80%-2 pers. 90%-2 pers. 95%-1 pers. 100%-1 pers.	50% -1 pers. 70% -1 pers. 75% -1 pers. 70-80%-1 pers. 90% -1 pers. 100% -1 pers.	70%-1 pers. 90%-2 pers. 95%-1 pers.		60% -6 pers. 70-80%-3 pers. 90% -1 pers.
<i>Average</i>	89%	77%	86%		68%
3: Kappan Females 41 - 55 Voters [10 participants]	56%-3 pers. 90%-1 pers.	80%-1 pers. 90%-4 pers.	50-60%-1 pers. 60% -1 pers. 60-70%-3 pers. 70% -1 pers. 70-80%-1 pers.		50%-4 pers. 60%-1 pers.
<i>Average</i>	64%	88%	65%		52%
4: Abovian Mixed male/female 56+, non-voters [10 participants]	30%-2 pers. 60%-1 pers. 15-20%- 3 pers.	25%-2 pers. 55-60%-1 pers. 10%-2 pers.	40-45%-1 pers. 40-50%-1 pers. 50%-1 pers. 10%-1 pers.	50%-1 pers. 55-60%-1 pers. 60%-1 pers.	40-45%-1 pers. 40-50%-1 pers.
<i>Average</i>	29%	20%	37%	56%	42%
5: Yerevan Females 18 - 24 Non-voters [10 participants]	80%-1 pers. 90%-5 pers. 97-99%-2 per 99%-2 pers.	90%-8 pers.	60%-6 pers. 70%-4 pers.		
<i>Average</i>	92%	90%	64%		
6: Artashat Males 25 - 40 Non-voters [10 participants]	70%-1 pers. 80%-5 pers.	60%-1 pers. 70%-3 pers.	60% -2 pers. 60-70%-3 pers.	50-60%-3 pers. 60% -1 pers.	55-60%-2 pers. 60% -2 pers. 70% -1 pers.
<i>Average</i>	78%	68%	63%	56%	61%
7: Yerevan Females 41 - 55 Non-voters [10 participants]	50%-1 pers. 60%-1 pers. 70%-1 pers. 70-80%-1 per 80%-2 pers. 90%-1 pers. 90%+-1 pers. 99%-1 pers. 100%-1 pers.	70% -1 pers. 90% -5 pers. 90-95%-1 pers. 99% -2 pers. 100% -1 pers.	47-50%-1 pers. 50%-2 pers. 58%-1 pers. 60%-2 pers. 70%-1 pers. 70%+ -2 pers. 50%-3 pers.		35-40%-1 pers. 50% -4 pers. 53% -1 pers. 60% -2 pers. 70% -1 pers.
<i>Average</i>	79%	91%	60%		53%
8: Idjevan Females 18 - 24 Non-voters [10 participants]	60%-1 pers. 99%-1 pers.	70%-1 pers. 100%-1 pers.	55%-1 pers.		
<i>Average</i>	80%	85%	55%		

D. Voter Apathy

Recent public opinion data reports that most people (62%) are interested in politics. Similarly, 53 out of 80 group participants (66%) state they are interested in politics. This is true whether they vote regularly or not.

During the last five years, the politicization of public consciousness in Armenia sharply increased. Political events of the last year were in the center of public attention: the impeachment of the first President of the Republic of Armenia, elections of the new President, then a Parliamentary election, a number of high-level assassinations, and not least the terrorist act in the National Assembly in October 1999. Political scandals, assassinations, terrorist acts, high-level court trials, frequent changes in the Government all had their effect – public opinion reached the highest level of politicization. The permanent increased attention to the negotiation process over the Karabakh problem added to this. During this same period, in the economic and social spheres, nothing special occurred except an on-going crisis. The main factors that disturbed public opinion recently were political events and scandals.

I consider that these elections are not necessary. If their candidate should be elected and elections are only [a] formality, it is better not to run elections. Elections should be fair and transparent.

Idjevan, female 18 – 24, non-voter

I think that after this October murder, nothing can get people to go vote. A lot of people trusted in Demercian because they saw real things that he did. Now they are so disappointed.

Yerevan, female 18 – 24, non-voter

Voter apathy means this society is indifferent to its future. Participation in elections show how many would go fight in a war. People think their vote won't make a difference. This is tragedy, because people show indifference towards their faith.

Yerevan, male 18 – 24, voter

If I were sure that my vote would make a change, that the result would not be tossed, then of course I would go.

Yerevan, female 25 – 30, non-voter

The youngest participants in the group sessions made these comments. Group participants were also given a list of 10 reasons why people may not vote. This list, constructed from previous research, was designed to include a variety of reasons not to vote: personal problems, lack of awareness, and alienation. These reasons are listed in Table 4, first column. Participants ranked each reason from "Most Important" to "Least Important" reason not to vote. The whole list is sorted in ascending order by the responses of Non-Voters, column 2. Column 3 gives answers provided by the Voters. The next 4 columns regroup the answers given in columns 2 and 3 by the age groups of the participants.

The "Most Important" reason for not voting is because "Nothing changes in Armenia, regardless of the election results." Everyone, on average, lists this as the leading reason, except the oldest participants. For those 56 years-of-age and older, the "Most Important" reason not to vote is because the "Results are not True and Honest." The second reason people do not vote is that "They have no trust or respect for the politicians that are elected." Most participants place this as the second reason, except the oldest participants who place this third.

Another reason frequently mentioned in discussions about voting is that people are too busy working, trying to survive, to take time and vote. This explanation is rated much lower than those referring to system or trust or efficacy. Another reason mentioned frequently is that people are not interested in politics, so they do not vote. Only those participants 25 – 40 years of age place this as a leading explanation (third place).

No one believes that people are "unaware that the elections are happening." The participants also agree that having elections on Sunday is not a reason people do not vote.

**Table 4. Ranking of Reasons Not to Vote by Electoral Experience and Age
Focus Group Participants (Self-Completed Questionnaire, N = 80)**

Reason for Not Voting	RANK					
	Non-Voter	Voter	18 - 24	25 - 40	41 - 55	56+
<i>Column 1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
Nothing changes in Armenia, regardless of the election results	1	1	1	1	1	2
They have no trust or respect for the politicians which are elected	2	2	2	2	3	3
They have no trust or respect for the election system or the people responsible for elections	3	4	4	4	2	6
The results are not true and honest	4	6	3	5	5	1
It is difficult to think about voting, when they have to work so hard just to get by	5	5	5	7	6	4
They think their one vote is not important	6	3	6	6	4	8
They have no interest in politics	7	8	8	3	9	7
Personal reasons such as problems in the family	8	7	7	8	7	10
Sunday is a day for personal and family life, not for politics	9	9	9	9	8	5
They do not know that elections are happening	10	10	10	10	10	9

The reasons listed above were provided to the participants to rank. They were also asked for additional reasons why people do not vote in an open-ended question. The most frequently given answer is that people "have no confidence or hope for the future," which was mentioned by 14 people. Six said that the people are not in Armenia, which suggests that the lists may exaggerate the number actually available to vote. Four stated that people are left off the lists. Another 5 mention psychological depression, and 3 lack of confidence in authorities. Other reasons were mentioned, but each by only one person.

III. Attitudes Toward Institutions, Leadership and the Political Situation

Initial public enthusiasm for economic reform and democracy was high in 1991. However, Armenia's checkered post-independence election history in combination with continuing economic stagnation, declining living standards, crumbling public services and endemic corruption have undermined the public's confidence in government and engendered widespread cynicism regarding the democratic process.⁴

A. The State and Meaning of Democracy in Armenia Today

Democracy is a hard concept to understand in Armenia today. It means many things to many different people. Whichever meaning they used, most people (61% [601]) were at least "somewhat dissatisfied" with democracy in Armenia today according to the 1999 national survey.

Participants in the group sessions were also dissatisfied with the state of democracy in Armenia today:

Maybe the constitution is democratic, but in reality no. We need a long period of time to have a democracy, though there are democratic institutions in Armenia. It is in the process of development.

Many years are needed for it. If we look from abroad, it could seem to be democratic, because people live free,[and] there is freedom of speech. If we look deeper into internal life, in reality it is difficult to say we have democracy.

Yerevan, males 18 – 24, voter

I think that Armenia is not a democracy. I have a very pessimistic opinion. Democracy doesn't exist anywhere.

Yerevan, female 41 – 55, non-voter

What is it that Armenians are dissatisfied with? What does "democracy" mean to them? Participants were asked this question directly in the group sessions. Different definitions for democracy were given in response. For many, democracy stands for freedom and rights. The list of rights mentioned include rule of law, free elections, and free speech.

[Democracy] depends on conducting free elections, laws should be implemented, the Constitution should be protected.

Idjevan, females 18 – 25, non-voters

If a person wants to say something against the system, no one says anything [against this person].

Kappan, female 41 – 55, voter

⁴ USAID/Armenia Strategic Plan FY 1999 – FY 2003, March 1999; p.3.

It is not just words, we should feel it in our lives. We feel that the rights of citizens in Armenia are not protected. Everybody should be equal before the law.

Yerevan male 18 – 24, voter

For others, a democracy guarantees the well-being of its citizens. The wishes for economic security, hopes for a better tomorrow in the Republic of Armenia, and the economic security they once had at the height of the Soviet Union all seem to connect together. All these together mean democracy for many.

People think that in a democracy, people live well.

Yerevan, female 25 – 40, non-voter

If 30% - 40% of their promises came true. Now 90% of population is below the poverty line.

Kappan female, 41 – 55, voter

Even if 70% were able to live and have jobs, they don't let people breathe they choke them. I think democracy is that people know where to do, how to do. Democracy is that government is concerned about peoples' problems. The majority is seeking for jobs abroad. There is no change election to election.

Abovian, mixed male/female, 56 years and above, non-voter

Differing opinions about the nature of democracy were found in earlier surveys as well. In 1998, IFES conducted a small survey on election officials. The total sample size was small (N = 120), but the survey was conducted on a special population. Approximately half of the officials interviewed for the study in 1998 believed that Armenia is a democracy. Almost as many (42%) did not. The remaining respondents did not answer the question. Next, respondents were asked to define what democracy meant to them in an open-ended question.

**Table 5. Meaning of Democracy, by Attitudes toward Armenian Democracy
Sample of Election Officials, 1998 (N = 120)**

Respondents who do not think Armenia is a democracy (N = 50)		Respondents who think Armenia is a democracy (N = 55)	
Protection of man's rights & freedom	25%	Protections of man's rights & freedom	37%
Government takes into account people's opinion	20%	Freedom of speech and press, and free will	26%
Freedom of word, press, and will	16%	Government provides social security/high social welfare	13%
Government provides social security/high social welfare	11%	Government takes into account people's opinion	5%
Law should be for everyone	7%	People should participate in law	4%
Government provides equal financial conditions for everyone	7%	Law should be more democratic	3%
Law should be more democratic	6%	Other	27%
People should participate in law	4%		
Other	10%		

This table is taken from the IFES report, *Survey of Election Officials in Armenia – 1998*.

The most frequently mentioned definition of democracy is that it “protects man’s rights and freedom.” This response is given spontaneously regardless of the respondent’s opinion whether Armenia is or is not a democracy. The striking difference between the two groups is that those who do not think Armenia is a democracy stress the importance of accounting for people’s opinion. In other words, a democracy listens to people. The election officials who do not think Armenia is a democracy, think that the opinion of people are not listened to by their government. This observation was stated in the 1998 report.

Another finding is important in Table 5. Two dimensions are clear in the open responses of the respondents. A democracy safeguards rights (basic rights, law, free speech), and it ensures the welfare of its citizens. Many, despite their opinion of the current system, share this response.

This understanding of “democracy”, which is usual for post-soviet societies, is strikingly demonstrated. Recent international research revealed the difference in the understanding of the meaning of “democracy” in the West and in CIS countries.⁵ Briefly, it could be said that for the population of CIS countries (including Armenia), “democracy” is first of all and mainly the presence of definite civil freedoms: freedom of speech, conscious, movement, etc. After 70 years of less-than-free existence in a totalitarian system, the biggest value of “democracy” for people seems to be the civil freedoms introduced and acquired by them. By contrast, public opinion in Western countries defines “democracy” first of all to mean participation of the population in the decision-making process on different levels.

In Armenia, people essentially understand “democracy” to be the possibility of several civil freedoms. It seems clear that opinions about the nature of democracy will vary in all democratic countries. However, it is surprising that such a high percentage of a population does not believe that their country, itself, is actually a democracy.

⁵ Betty M. Jacob, Krzysztof Ostrowski, and Henry Teune, eds. *Democracy and local governance: ten empirical studies: national reports from Austria, Belarus, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Slovenia, Sweden, and Ukraine* (Honolulu: Matsunaga Institute for Peace, 1993).

B. Confidence in Leadership

One reason many do not believe Armenia is a democracy is that they believe they have little power or influence in government. This point was made by many of the electoral officials cited above. People do not believe they can influence their leaders, and many do not believe their leaders are acting in their best interests. This thought was also repeated many times in the group sessions. However, it must be pointed out that the participants recruited for these sessions would be more likely to have these feelings than others. Many of the group members do not vote. They have already decided that they are not being represented adequately, and therefore they have little confidence in their leaders. Still, national data demonstrates that the opinions held by the group session participants are reflected in the overall population as well.

Figure 2 presents data on levels of confidence for institutions from the USAID 1999 survey. Two groups of respondents are formed for the comparison. The 1999 survey asked respondents about their experience in four recent elections: the 1998 Presidential, 1999 Parliamentary, 1996 local, and the 1999 local elections. In Figure 2, Voters are identified as those respondents who voted both in the 1998 Presidential and 1999 Parliamentary election, as well as one of the local elections. Non-voters participated in less than this. This categorizes the respondents into 52% [522] Non-Voters and 48% [478] Voters. This is the closest comparison that can be done with the participants in the focus groups. For the Focus Group Discussion sessions, Voters are classified as people who voted in at least three national elections since 1991, and at least one local. (See Section V.)

Figure 2 displays the percent that have at least a "fair amount" of confidence in the selected institutions. As shown, Voters have higher levels of confidence in many of the institutions. The most important comparisons for this report are the responses for Parliament, political parties, local government, and the overall level of trust in people. Voters have significantly higher levels of confidence in Parliament than Non-Voters (44% vs. 28% confident) and slightly more for local government (26% vs. 17% confident). There is little difference between the two groups concerning their confidence in political parties (17% vs. 12% confident) or in their overall trust in people (27% vs. 25% who believe "most people can be trusted".) Non-Voters are not much different than Voters in their opinion toward people, or their overall sense of trust. They have different attitudes about political institutions.

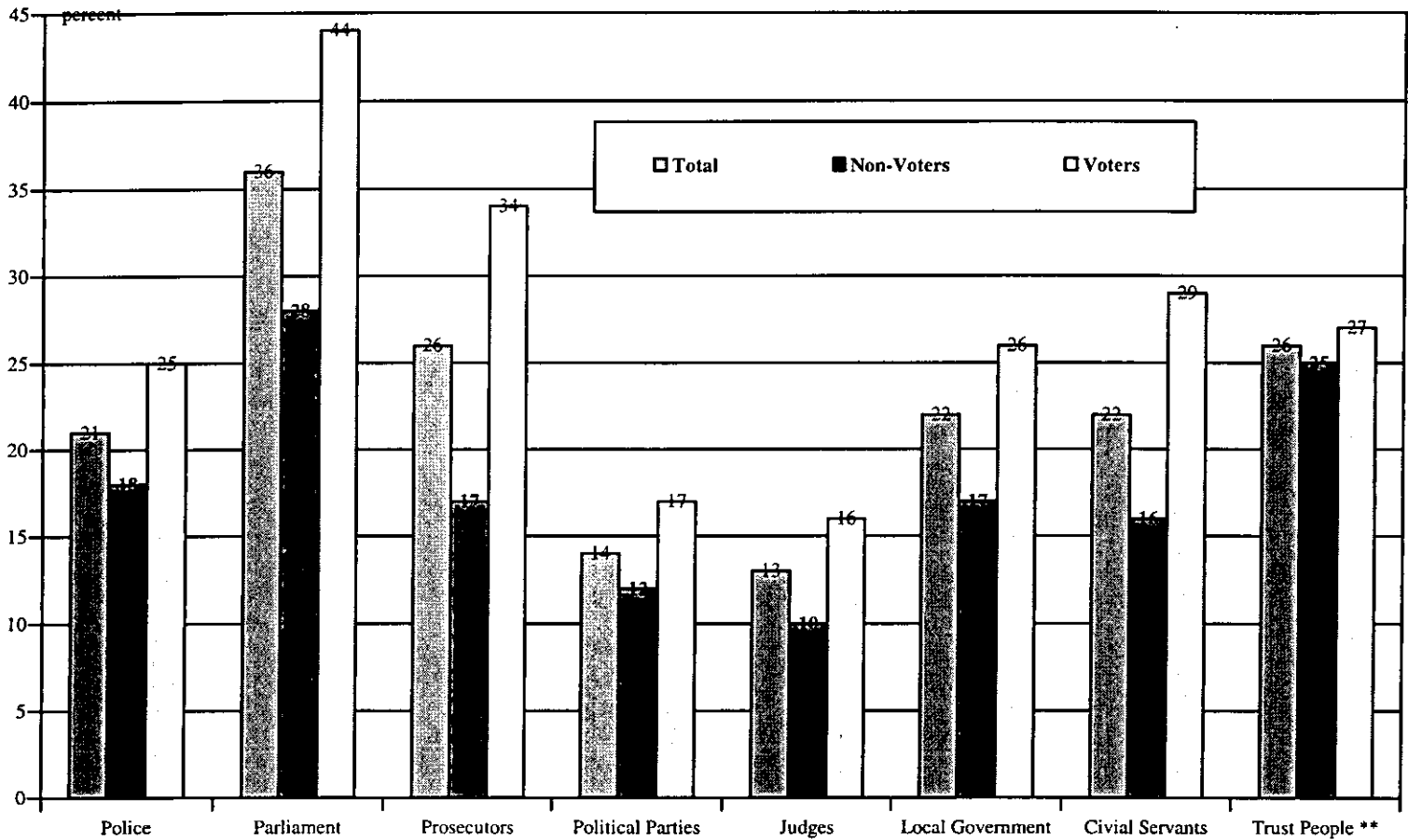
Figure 2 demonstrates the point that confidence is generally low regardless whether a person votes or does not vote. The majority of either group expresses "not much" or "no" confidence in the institutions listed in the survey.

The important point is not that many people have little confidence in their leaders. More important are those who retain confidence. There were several such people in the group sessions, people who believe that leadership is working for them. These people can be found among those who vote, and those who do not. It is useful to understand the nature of their belief. Those who remain convinced that there are leaders who care, also seem reconciled to the belief that these leaders may not be able to overcome the (negative) situation that binds the country. They think that these committed leaders are few, and have limited power to achieve beneficial results for the people.

Figure 2. Confidence* in Institutions by Electoral Experience, USAID 1999

[Confidence = "great deal" + "fair amount"]

*(N = 1000: 522 Non-Voters, 478 Vote)



* Question Wording: "Please tell me how much or how little confidence you have in each of the following."

** Question Wording: "What about the people you meet on the street. Generally speaking would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?" [% "People can be trusted"]

I think, that [there are] definite officials, however, [that] represent people's interests. But there are a very small number of such people.

Yerevan, female 25-40, non-voter

[T]hey (officials) try to protect [ordinary people's interests], but apparently cannot.

Artashat, male 25-40, non-voter

I think there are people who do represent, but mainly no.

I think there are people who want to work for the citizens, but the overall atmosphere does not let them. With time, they become like the rest.

Yeveran, females 25 – 40, non-voters

In generally and on the whole, [the] National Assembly to some extent expresses people's interests.

Idjevan, female 18-24, non-voter

Nearly half of the respondents in the 1999 national survey (48% [257]) claim they know whom to contact “if I had a problem and needed help from government . . .” In general, the impression is that people trust local authorities somewhat more. At least local authorities “are closer to people,” and more available, than central authorities.

[There is a] new head of community and he did much during his work period. He did much in improving living standards during his government.

Our head of community did much for people. Much for aged people. Our head of community has much respect.

Abovian, mixed male/female aged 55 and older, non-voters

For many, the problem with the local authorities is that they are prevented from accomplishing much by forces outside their control.

. . . because of this bureaucratic system we have, the local leader is not able to help even if he has the desire to.

Yerevan, female 18 – 24, non-voter

Besides this, the President and his office retain respect among many people. Some people even believe that the current situation stops the President from achieving much for the people.

I consider that our President works well enough, but there are preventive forces that prevent him.

Idjevan, female 18 – 24, non-voter

The following quotes illustrate that many people support the practice of appointing regional governors (marzpets) directly rather than through popular election.

If we think logically, the governors are part of the executive. It is logical that they are appointed by the President.

Yerevan, male 18 – 24, voter

They should be appointed . . . the authorities, know better who is qualified for this.

They should be appointed, but worthy people should be appointed.

Yerevan, females 25 – 40, non-voters

These issues are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Confidence in Institutions

FGD #	National Institutions		National vs. Local Government	Election of Leaders: Direct or Appointed	
				Marzpet	Local leaders
1: Yerevan	National Assembly – 2 pers.	3 pers.	Neither	Elect - 2 pers.	
Males 18 - 24				Appoint-2 pers.	
Voters					
[10 participants]					
2: Yerevan	Office of President – 1 pers.	4 Pers	National -1 pers.	Elect - 2 pers.	Appoint-1 per
Females 25 – 40			Local -8 pers.	Appoint-2 pers.	
non-voters					
[10 participants]					
3: Kappan	None	4 pers.	National -5 pers.	Elect - 3 pers.	Appoint-1 per
Females 41 - 55			Local -0 pers.	Appoint-7 pers.	
Voters					
[10 participants]					
4: Abovian	National Assembly – 1 pers.	6 pers.	National -1 pers.	Elect - 3 pers.	Elect - 9 pers.
Mixed male/female	None – 9 pers.			Appoint-1 pers.	Appoint-1 pers.
56+, non-voters					
[10 participants]					
5: Yerevan	National Assembly – 3 pers.	5 Pers.	National - 3 pers.	Elect - 3 pers.	Elect - 6 pers.
Females 18 - 24			Local -2 pers.	Appoint-6 pers.	
non-voters			Neither -5 pers.		
[10 participants]					
6: Artashat	National Assembly – 5 pers.	3 pers.	Local -10 pers	Elect - 2 pers.	Appoint-2 pers.
Males 25 - 40					
non-voters					
[10 participants]					
7: Yerevan	None	6 pers.	Neither	Elect - 9 pers.	Elect – 10 pers.
Females 41 - 55				Appoint-1 pers.	
non-voters					
[10 participants]					
8: Ijevan	Constitutional Court-4 pers.	4 pers.	Local -2 pers.	Elect - 10 pers.	
females 18 - 24	Government – 1 pers.		National -1 pers.		
non-voters	Court – 1 pers.				
[10 participants]					

C. Representation and Constituency

Relatively few people believe that their leaders represent them. In the recent national survey, most respondents disagreed with the statements that their leaders “paid attention to them.” These responses are presented below:

Table 7.
Percent who “disagree” that their [leaders] are interested in their opinions*
1999 USAID Data (N= 1000)

Leader	%	#
Government	71	712
Marzpet (regional governors)	73	729
Local government	69	693
Political parties	54	544

*Question wording: [LEADER] are very interested in and pay attention to what people like me think.”
Responses for “somewhat disagree” and “disagree.”

The more striking finding reported in this data is the extent that respondents disagree with these statements. For the Marzpets, 73% [729] “disagree” that the regional governors are interested in their opinions. Similarly, 69% [693] “disagree” that local governments are paying them “proper attention.”

The national findings are mirrored in findings from the group research. People believe that politicians are only interested in them [voters] during election times.

We don't feel they represent the interests of our families. I haven't seen anything yet. Of course, they do grease the road before elections, but it is not representative ness.

Yeveran, male 18 – 24, voter

They promise a lot of things before the elections or do something for the building to try to get people to vote.

After they are elected, there is little time to do anything for the people and they have little desire to do this. The people's situation remains the same.

Yerevan, females 41 – 55, voters

This type of comment was repeated in all sessions across Armenia. It seems that these tactics first became widespread in the middle of the 1990s. Soon, people came to recognize this as a tactic to win their support in the election. Perhaps one significant development over these last years is the increase in expectations that political leaders will represent those who voted for them. People expect more than one-off gestures before elections. The concept of constituency may be developing in Armenia.

I consider that our representative should represent our rights and pay attention to our problems. We elected him, and that is why he should pay attention to our problems.

Idjevan, female 18 – 25, non-voter

If the authorities are for the people, then we have a democracy. When they take into account the decisions of people.

Yerevan female 25 – 40, non-voter

This is clear in people's responses toward the Question and Answer period in the National Assembly. This session is regularly broadcast to the Armenian public. During the session, representatives of government are requested to attend the National Assembly, to answer questions about the performance of the officials in fixing the problems that confront the country.

From time to time I follow [the Q&A sessions] and sometimes they ask important questions. The questions are asked the following way: They ask the member of government, mainly problems connected with electricity, and they are asked to present the questions in written form. I have seen a lot of arguments and discussion going on there.

They are asked to present the questions in a form of a letter. And I see in many cases the questions do not get clear answers. They discuss the problem at the moment, but later on they forget about it.

Most of the members of the assembly ask the question so that the voters see it. Of course, they are more active during the first period right after they have been elected. Many questions were not answered because they couldn't. Sometimes, they avoid or answer vaguely.

Yerevan, females 18 – 24, non-voters

Most of the participants in the groups regularly watch these Q&A sessions. (Table 6) Many describe the sessions as events for the benefit of viewers, with little real substance and even less chance that something substantial will come out of it.

The individual situation in Kappan is difficult. He [the representative for Kappan], never raises problems about repairing industry in our region. We can ask any question, but there are no solutions. We have confidence that they will identify the problems, but not fix them.

Kappan, female 41 – 55, voter

The important point is that people have come to expect more from their representatives than an outward appearance or last minute gesture before elections. This should be interpreted as a healthy sign in the middle of apathy. The level of education in Armenia is relatively high. Armenians are still proud of their former position in the Soviet Union. Many believe that

Armenians are capable, successful people, that it is in their genes. Expectations will eventually bring forward someone capable of delivering on them. In the meantime, Armenians expect that those who try will be stopped from succeeding.

D. Corruption

Corruption was, is, and [always] will be.

Idjevan, female 18 – 24, non-voter

Participants in the May 2000 focus group sessions *were asked*: “What percentage would say that official corruption is very common today?” The general pattern in their answers indicate they believe that corruption among officials is similar or worse today:

70%	4 people
80%	6 people
85%	1 person
90%	4 people
95%	1 person
99%	4 people
100%	5 people

The rest of the participants agreed with these estimates. None of them believe corruption is less important today than in the past.

In every system there is corruption. In education system, there is a big corruption. The majority thinks there is a lot of corruption and the majority is right.

The corruption is common in court processes, during the cases. Corruption is taking place during the elections and [with people] taking some posts. It is widely spread in Armenia.

Abovian, mixed female/male 55 years and older, non-voters

Corruption is found everywhere, is part of every social institution. However, Armenians today believe that the scope and nature of corruption has changed for the worse in their country. The corruption of the past is perceived to be different than what they experience today. Three reasons were given for this in the group discussions. In the past (under the communist system), corruption was in the background only.

Under communism, when we had everything, it existed but no one paid attention to it.

Yerevan, male 18 – 24, voter

[Corruption is] very large, now it is more open. Of course we had it in the past and we were frightened, now it is widely spread. We didn't feel the burden of corruption in the past.

Now everything is more obvious. I think that everywhere there is corruption. The rate is the difference.

Yerevan females 25 – 40, non-voters

Second, more people could afford it then and it did not affect their lives as much as it does today. Corruption has not only increased to the point where it is out in the open and obvious. Today, no one can afford it.

Now there is not much money, that may be why corruption will become less.

Abovian, mixed male/female group 56 years and older, non-voters

Somebody will give money to anybody. They want money, I have none. If I received some, I would take it.

Kappan woman 41 – 55, voter

The third reason is that corruption now affects ordinary people in their everyday lives. Corruption is now a way of life in Armenia. People give bribes to gain something, such as a job or entrance into a field of study.

[P]reviously, if a student studied he could . . . pass his exams. . . [A] student who did not study could pay money to pass his exams. Now, both must pay money.

Idjevan, female 18 – 24, non-voter

Corruption is no longer in the background. No one, in the focus groups, admitted to taking bribes and most of the people were uncomfortable discussing the subject; however, several people may have been in a position to receive bribes. For example, a few participants had served on electoral commissions in the past. No one admitted to taking bribes; however, several said they would if they had the chance. Many people talked about paying bribes and stressed that it was necessary in order to get anything done. They viewed the situation as being out of one's personal control and excused the behavior of those who took bribes by saying that state finances were inadequate and no one could live on what they received.

I have never given bribes personally. I have come across such problems and all the institutions are tightly connected between each other. To protect your rights, you have to give bribes. If you don't some other will give and he will benefit, and you won't. I have had a lot of connections with such institutions, and I am sure all of them are corrupt.

Corruption effects everyday life and ordinary people.

We came to the conclusion that it is the essence of human beings to want more than they can really have. Abroad, when leaders of two mafia groups kill each other, ordinary people are not effected. Here, people are effected because of this corruption. I think that some countries would say that they don't have corruption, because it is on another level.

We have all given bribes, but we have not received them because we are not government officials.

Yerevan, males 18 – 24, voters

Armenians clearly blame this condition on the economic condition they live in. Many state that corruption will never go out of everyday life in Armenia until the economic situation improves, and people are able to provide for themselves and their families without it. But, it is not this form of corruption that bothers Armenians. For many, corruption is a problem, but it is a lower priority than the economic situation. People worry about corruption on a larger scale than this. They worry about what is done by their political leaders. The type of corruption that really concerns Armenians is the selling of national assets to international interests.

Armenians also worry that in politics everything is for sale, and that this form of corruption will keep the country from correcting its current problems and from moving toward a better future. Few people believe corruption will change, and they give several reasons. One, they do not expect the economic situation will improve to a level where people have enough to support their families without relying on corruption to survive. Two, they do not have confidence that their political leaders will do something against it. They believe that the leaders they now have benefit from the current situation, and those who would change it will not be powerful enough to succeed.

The Government tried to concentrate on corruption, but we saw what has happened. When Vazgen Sargsyan was eliminated, everyone spoke that he was struggling against corruption.

Yerevan, male 18 – 24, voter

Many believe corruption is too widespread among these officials for something to be done by government. Those who would be responsible for the program, would be corrupt themselves.

We don't have a democracy and will never have since we have people who take the position for the position itself. They are corrupt. I have never seen that a leader asks an ordinary person how they live. I think it doesn't matter whether leaders or political parties change, the situation remains the same. We see they build multi-store buildings, and a lot of people sell their apartments in order to survive.

Yerevan, female 41 – 55, non-voter

We asked participants whether the Government should focus its efforts on fighting corruption. Many believe that that this is a major problem that requires attention. Many also believe that the economy is the priority, and corruption comes afterwards. Almost all the participants would support government efforts to fight corruption. Few believe that their leaders are the appropriate people for the job.

First, the corruption should be eliminated in the Government. Only afterwards can it work out a program. If this happens, we will not believe in corruption either.

Kappan, female 41 – 55, voter

The only way forward, in the minds of many, is through the office of the President. He alone seems to be relatively above corruption. A participant stated that he already has everything, so he has nothing to gain from corruption. Many still have faith that he can act in their interests.

IV. Civic Participation and the Role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

According to data from the Ministry of Justice (01.01.2000), there are more than 2,500 NGOs in Armenia. All operate in accordance with the "Law on Social Organizations," adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia in 1996. After adopting the new civil code, some changes were made to that law. Presently, the government elaborated a project of a new law about NGOs. On the whole, the legal field for NGOs is not perfect yet. However, it allows the creation of new NGOs and their function in the republic without any difficulty.

According to Ministry of Justice's registration records 90% of all NGOs are concentrated in the capital, Yerevan. In the marzes of the republic there are very few. During ten years of existence, this third sector of society has significantly developed. Today the NGO-movement in Armenia includes a wide scope of activity such as charity, humanitarian aid, rights protection, juridical consultation, women's issues, gender problems, migration and refugees, human rights, democratization of social institutes, ecology and protection of environment, youth, children, soldiers and recruits, families of war veterans and many others.

Among the country's NGOs separate sectors have been formed, such as rights protection, women, migration, ecology, charity and others. Many NGOs have a rich experience in cooperating with international organizations – USAID, AAA NGO Center, UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF, IOM, NRC, RCS, IRC, MSF, UMCOR, Save the Children, Counterpart, Parinak, Eurasia Foundation and many others. They participate in numerous international meetings of NGOs. Besides, many strong and well developed NGOs have made very strong contacts and partnerships in the region, implementing regional projects jointly with their colleagues from Georgia and Azerbaijan.

A. Knowledge of and Membership in NGOs

Most of the participants of focus-group discussions, as the population on the whole, are aware about the existence of NGOs. The most familiar NGO is Soldiers' Mothers. More than half of the participants know them. Opinions about this group were positive and the participants believe that the group fulfills an important role in society. The Women's Republican Council and the Union of Young Lawyers are also widely known among participants across the country. These findings are presented in Table 9, below.

(This table also gives a rating for the importance of selected social issues. The third column presents a list of 10 social issues which was derived from previous research in Armenia. The fourth column gives the number of group members which mentioned that issue as the "most important" on the list. As shown in Table 9, most people are concerned with social welfare, the national economy and the quality of their life at home. These concerns help explain their attitudes toward NGOs. In group discussions, participants often return to the theme, what are NGOs doing for them in their lives. Other social issues, such as electoral reform, crime and health care, are of less importance. Some of the issues addressed by the NGOs are not the central concerns of these people. This issue is returned to at the end of the section.)

In the perception of many, NGOs are the same social organizations that existed in the past. They look the same and act according to the same principles, only maybe their names are more modern.

In the past, we also had such organizations dealing with women's issues.

Kappan, female 41-55, voter

In all times there existed such organizations. But in the past the government dealt with them and they were not called NGOs.

Yerevan, female 25-40, non-voter

There were such organizations in the past, but now they are more numerous.

Idjevan, female 18-24, non-voter

According to the opinion of other participants of focus group discussions, the NGO is something new in their life. It is something that they did not have before.

NGO is a new institution in our life.

Abovyan, mixed male/female 56 years and older, non-voter

NGOs are new organizations. A part of them are useful, efficient organizations, but the rest - no.

Yerevan, male 18-24, non-voter

The population's knowledge of NGOs cannot be considered sufficient and profound. It has a rather superficial character. It has to be taken into consideration that the attitude of the population (especially the older generation) toward new NGOs is based largely on their previous experience and ideas of such super-organizations as Komsomol, Pioneeria, Labor Unions, Women's Councils, etc. In Soviet times these organizations, which were set up with the approval and under the control of the government, unified millions of people. In fact, the life of each Soviet individual, beginning from the age of seven and up to old age, proceeded in cooperation and membership with these huge organizations. This left its profound trace in their understanding of what a social organization is. And their knowledge and attitude towards modern "micro" NGOs is shaped by these past ideas.

As compared to the mighty organizations of the past, today's NGOs seem "microscopic" organizations, helpless, inefficient, weak, and unable to significantly change something, though not useless. NGOs are seen by many as inefficient and unable to accomplish any meaningful difference in the lives of people.

I have a positive attitude towards NGOs, because each of them solves some problems in different spheres of society; however their opportunities in Armenia are very restricted.

Yerevan, male 18-24, non-voter

Only charitable organizations are important. However, on the whole the institution of NGOs is not yet settled, because the society itself is not yet settled.

Artashat, male 24-40, non-voter

Table 9. Knowledge of NGOs and Most Important Social Issues

FGD	NGOs	Issues	#
1: Yerevan Males 18 – 24 Voters [10 participants]	<i>Know Which NGOs</i> "Soldier's Mother" – 5 pers. "It's Your Choice" – 1 pers. "League of Women Voters" – 2 pers. "Women's Republican Council" – 2 pers. "Union of Young Lawyers" – 2 pers. "Maternity Fund" – 1 pers.	<i>Most important</i> 1. Better life for myself and my family. 2. The social welfare system 3. The quality of health care 4. Stability of the national economy 5. How economic reforms are developing 6. The level of political freedom 7. Protection of personal rights and freedoms of citizens by the government 8. Reforming our electoral system 9. The fight against crime 10. Eliminating corruption from public life	1 1 1 7 3 0 2 0 0 2
2: Yerevan Females 25 – 40 Non-voters [10 participants]	"Soldier's Mother" – 2 pers.	1. Better life for myself and my family. 2. The social welfare system 3. The quality of health care 4. Stability of the national economy 5. How economic reforms are developing 6. The level of political freedom 7. Protection of personal rights and freedoms of citizens by the government 8. Reforming our electoral system 9. The fight against crime 10. Eliminating corruption from public life	2 3 0 1 0 0 2 0 0 1
3: Kappan Females 41 – 55 Voters [10 participants]	"It's Your Choice" – 3 pers. "League of Women Voters" – 5 pers. "Women's Republican Council" – 10 pers. "Soldier's Mother" – 10 pers. "Maternity Fund" – 5 pers.	1. Better life for myself and my family. 2. The social welfare system 3. The quality of health care 4. Stability of the national economy 5. How economic reforms are developing 6. The level of political freedom 7. Protection of personal rights and freedoms of citizens by the government 8. Reforming our electoral system 9. The fight against crime 10. Eliminating corruption from public life	0 1 1 4 0 0 3 0 0 2
4: Abovian Mixed male/female 56+, non-voters [10 participants]	"Women's Republican Council" – 4 pers. "Union of Young Lawyers" – 4 pers. "Soldier's Mother" – 4 pers. "Maternity Fund" – 4 pers.	QUESTION NOT ASKED DURING GROUP SESSION	

Table 9. Knowledge of NGOs and Most Important Social Issues (continued)

FGD	NGOs	Issues	#
5: Yerevan Females 18 - 24 Non-voters [10 participants]	"Soldier's Mother" -4 pers. "Union of Young Lawyers"- 2 pers. "Women's Republican Council" - 1 pers.	1. Better life for myself and my family. 2. The social welfare system 3. The quality of health care 4. Stability of the national economy 5. How economic reforms are developing 6. The level of political freedom 7. Protection of personal rights and freedoms of citizens by the government 8. Reforming our electoral system 9. The fight against crime 10. Eliminating corruption from public life	0 0 1 2 5 0 0 0 0 2
6: Artashat Males 25 - 40 Non-voters [10 participants]	"It's Your Choice" - 3 pers. "Women's Republican Council" - 5 pers. "Soldier's Mother" -5 pers.	1. Better life for myself and my family. 2. The social welfare system 3. The quality of health care 4. Stability of the national economy 5. How economic reforms are developing 6. The level of political freedom 7. Protection of personal rights and freedoms of citizens by the government 8. Reforming our electoral system 9. The fight against crime 10. Eliminating corruption from public life	6 0 0 1 0 0 1 0 0 1
7: Yerevan Females 41 - 55 Non-voters [10 participants]	"Women's Republican Council" - 10 pers. "Soldier's Mother" -10 pers. "Union of Young Lawyers"- 3 pers.	1. Better life for myself and my family. 2. The social welfare system 3. The quality of health care 4. Stability of the national economy 5. How economic reforms are developing 6. The level of political freedom 7. Protection of personal rights and freedoms of citizens by the government 8. Reforming our electoral system 9. The fight against crime 10. Eliminating corruption from public life	0 5 0 1 1 0 1 0 1 0
8: Ijevan Females 18 - 24 Non-voters [10 participants]	"Women's Republican Council" - 3 pers. "Union of Young Lawyers"- 5 pers. "Soldier's Mother" -5 pers. "Maternity Fund" - 2 pers.	1. Better life for myself and my family. 2. The social welfare system 3. The quality of health care 4. Stability of the national economy 5. How economic reforms are developing 6. The level of political freedom 7. Protection of personal rights and freedoms of citizens by the government 8. Reforming our electoral system 9. The fight against crime 10. Eliminating corruption from public life	0 7 1 3 0 0 0 0 1 0

B. Attitudes Toward Participation in NGOs

I am a member of Women with University Education . . . They are playing an important role. I am a member of this NGO and they are doing much work among women and I consider their role is important . . . Being a member of an NGO, I [raised] an issue that was important to me. Members solved it to some extent. They can help.

Idjevan, female 18 - 24, non-voter

I am a member of an NGO. I think that people getting involved in NGOs have a way of expressing themselves. I don't see any difference between what we had in the past, it is just that the quality has changed. I think people who don't get to express themselves at work, get involved in such organizations. And of course, people who need money get involved with the hope it can give them an opportunity to earn something.

It is an opportunity for me to contribute to this process to help people in some way with my knowledge.

I had a connection with such an organization, connected with my profession. I think such organizations are useful. I would like that there are more of them.

Yerevan, females 41 – 55, non-voters

NGOs have made an impact on some people in this country. These quotations express sentiments that reinforce the opinions of anyone who already supports the NGO-movement. As stated above, NGOs provide a way for people to express themselves, to overcome the limited influence they may have in their work, and to significantly help others. A secondary motivation captured in these statements refers to the income that comes from working in a NGO.

However, these types of testimonials are limited in number. Public opinion polls show that relatively few people are members of NGOs. The 1999 USAID survey indicates that less than 10% of the adult population is members of any public organization or group. Few of these are active members.

Positive feelings toward NGOs are not uniform across society, as reflected in the focus group sessions. Women were more positive toward NGOs, more likely to express interest to join them, and more praising of their role in society than males. Perhaps, for this reason, one female participant remarked that only women joined NGOs.

When a group of male participants was asked whether they would join such organizations, the first response was silence. In time, they responded:

It depends on the situation. Now, no. I have too many problems. First, I have to solve them.

If I got paid, I would. If I don't, no.

Yerevan, males 18 – 24, voters

Male participants more frequently stressed the financial benefits and personal motivations that influence decisions to join NGOs.

Maybe in the future [I would join] if my interests coincide with the interests of such groups. If they showed assistance, of course.

Artashat, male 25 – 46, non-voter

[NGOs] are mostly for the career. It is an opportunity to go forward.

People want to reach position through this organization.

Yerevan, males 18 – 24, voters

Women's responses to the same question are different:

Yes, I would join for interest. To be useful for somebody.

I would love to join, so I can be of help for my country and people.

Yerevan, females 25 – 40, non-voters

I would enjoy to join Soldiers' Mothers.

Kappan, female 41 – 55, voter

It is not possible to generalize from this research to the whole population. The gender difference is not universal in Armenian society. Other women in the group sessions were critical of NGOs, and expressed little desire to join.

I don't feel comfortable and I don't see any future connected to it. If there was an opportunity I would go abroad and get involved, but here no. Here, they can't offer us any interesting work or they make us do work we wouldn't like. The salaries are not too high.

Yerevan, female 18 – 24, non-voter

I am a party member, but NGOs, I haven't the time to join.

Kappan, female 41 – 55, voter

Some males stated they already belong to NGOs, or might join in the future.

However, a gender difference is suggested in this research. Some basis for this is also shown in the 1999 USAID survey. Its findings show that women are more likely to be members (both active and inactive) of community groups, labor unions, and church groups. Males were more likely to be members of art and educational groups, sports clubs and youth groups. Future work should explore this further. Several questions to ask include:

Are females more open to the NGO movement than males?

Are females more likely to join NGOs than males?

Are the motivations to join different between males and females?

Do males emphasize financial reward and future career development than females?

Do females emphasize empowerment and helping others more than males?

C. The Role of NGOs in Social and Political Life in Armenia

Today the NGO-sector involves approximately 3% of Armenia's population. Of course, this is not much, but the number of people involved in social activities through NGOs is steadily growing. In the present condition of high level of unemployment (34% - 40%), people find new opportunities to build occupations.⁶ That is why in Armenia involvement in NGOs is viewed, not so much as socially useful activity, but rather as a source of income. Sometimes, it is only a supplementary source of income, but more often it becomes the main source for many people. In some NGOs, the salaries of the main staff are 10-20 times higher than the average wage level in the country. But there are very few of these types of NGOs. Besides, the incomes of NGO-members directly depend on temporary projects which they implement.

Since the main source of financing of Armenian NGOs are the different international funds and organizations, they had to recruit people who mastered foreign languages, computer technology, Internet and who possess other modern skills of office work for their staff.

Due to the kind of work they complete and because of the lack of permanent budgetary funding (like in state organizations), the employees of NGOs are as a rule enthusiastic, initiative-taking people in active search of new contacts, programs, projects and funds. Unlike state employees of Soviet times, who constantly awaited help from the government, the employees of NGOs can rely only on their own abilities and initiative. Gradually, the NGO-sector gathers together and forms highly qualified, dynamic and modern staff, whose quality and potential is not worse (if not better) than the personnel of the government administration.

However, in the matter of its influence on the social, political and economic life of the society, the NGO-sector is barely noticeable. It is yet to declare itself in the society and to find acceptable forms of cooperation with the government. Here there are many unsolved problems, but it is clear that the NGO-sector is in the stage of formation and gradual extension and strengthening of its participation in different spheres of social life. Already they act as partners with equal rights with state agencies in a number of public spheres. In the areas of civil rights protection, gender issues, charity and aid for the handicapped and many others, they surpass the state sector in the volume of the work they accomplish.

The public's attitude toward NGOs reflects that they are still in a rudimentary state. The extension of their activity is very small. Dependence upon donors and foreign funds is too large. Out of 2,500 NGOs, more than half exists only on paper, and the other part consists of NGOs with only two-three members. Many NGOs are inactive during many months and even years in the expectation of new financing of some project. They snatch at any suggestion, not paying attention whether the project corresponds to the profile of their activity or not. In fact, according to the Ministry of Justice, only 30% of registered NGOs are actively functioning.

Table 9, above, rated the importance of 10 social issues for the group participants. This information is repeated in an abbreviated form in Table 10. The second column gives a list of 10 social issues that have been studied in previous research. The list was presented to the group

⁶ See the Institute of Economy of Armenian National Academy of Sciences.

participants. Then they were asked which one was the most important on the list. The second column, Rank, gives the percentage which mention the specific issue as "most important." (The percentage is based on a total of 70 people. In one group, the list of issues was not given to group members.) Other group members may not have verbalized their choice. However, their non-verbal behavior in the groups indicated their basic agreement with the answers of their colleagues.

As shown below, most people are concerned about the national economy and social welfare. These are the issues which people are looking for answers to, leadership and noticeable improvement. It seems necessary that a NGO act on these issues to have a significant impact on the overall population. And, by their nature, these issues are the most difficult areas in which to achieve success. Perhaps for this reason, many participants expressed the opinion that NGOs should focus on charitable activities. Given the high level of dissatisfaction with the overall standard of life in Armenia, the need for charity and economic improvement is more than NGOs can achieve on a scale large enough to impact the total population. For this reason, many participants also express the opinion that NGOs have little impact, and that they have achieved little.

Table 10. Most Important Social Issue
(Excerpted from Table 9)

Most Important Social Issue	Rank
4. Stability of the national economy	27.1
2. The social welfare system	24.3
1. Better life for myself and my family.	12.9
5. How economic reforms are developing	12.9
7. Protection of personal rights and freedoms of citizens by the government	12.9
10. Eliminating corruption from public life	11.4
3. The quality of health care	5.7
9. The fight against crime	2.9
6. The level of political freedom	0.0
8. Reforming our electoral system	0.0

V. Methodological Notes

The data presented in this report comes from five sources. The primary source of data is the recorded and videotaped sessions from eight focus group discussions commissioned for this project. Reference is also frequently made to results from a national public opinion poll commissioned by USAID in November 1999. Third, a brief interview of 275 voters was conducted after the local elections May 25, 2000. The purpose of this study is to gain information about the accuracy of the electoral lists, and whether voters understand their recourse in case their names are not on the lists. Results from the Electoral List Verification study are summarized in another IFES document. Findings from two other studies are presented where they can contribute to the points being discussed. In 1998, IFES conducted a specialized survey of election officials. Below the important aspects of these studies are highlighted.

1. The May 2000 Focus Group research. In May 2000, IFES commissioned a series of focus group sessions with the purpose to gain in-depth understanding of the electorate's attitudes toward the electoral process, with special attention on reasons why people do not vote in elections. The secondary goal of the study is to illuminate the other areas presented in this report. This study was intended to directly support the activities of the Central Election Commission in Armenia in seeking reasons why and strategies to address a perceived decrease in voting participation.

Between May 4 - 5, three firms were interviewed in Yerevan for conducting this project. A Request for Proposal was sent to all three. The project was awarded and the group sessions carried out by the Armenian Sociological Association.

Eight Focus Group sessions were carried out between May 15 - 19. The design of each session and the criteria for recruiting the participants are presented in Table 11. Overall, 80 people participated in the sessions. Six groups consisted of "non-voters" of all age groups, both males and females. Two groups consisted of "voters." Definitions of these are given in notes following Table 11. Four groups sessions were conducted in Yerevan, and the other four were carried out in four regional cities (towns).

IFES held several working sessions before the group discussions to review the discussion guide and other research materials. One additional group was conducted earlier in the process to finalize (pretest) the research materials. Experienced moderators led all groups, and the research director attended each session. All sessions were videotaped. Armenian transcripts are available for the group sessions, as well as extensive notes in English.

The discussion guide is included as Appendix One. The group discussions consisted of five sections:

- I. Introduction (and self-completed questionnaire)
- II. Experience with elections
- III. Political leadership

IV. Knowledge of and attitudes toward NGOs

V. Corruption

VI. Voter Apathy

VII. Poster test (these results are discussed in another in-house IFES document).

Group sessions lasted approximately two hours. In the first 20 minutes of each session, participants filled out a self-completed questionnaire. (Appendix Two)

Table 11. Design for Selection of Focus Group Participants

REGION					
AGE	YEREVAN	ARARAT (ARTASHAT)	KOTAYK (ABOVIAN)	TAVUSH (IJEVAN)	SYIUNK (KAPPAN)
18 – 24 (3)	1. MALE V 1. MALE NV			1. FEMALE NV	
25 – 40 (2)	1. FEMALE NV				1. MALE NV
41 – 55 (2)	1. FEMALE NV	1. FEMALE V			
56 + (1)			1. M/F NV		
TOTAL (8)	4	1	1	1	1

Table 12. Education and Employment by Focus Group Session

	Focus group session																Total	
	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		Col %	#
	Col %	#	Col %	#	Col %	#	Col %	#	Col %	#	Col %	#	Col %	#	Col %	#		
Level of Education																		
No formal education							10%	1									1.30%	1
Secondary incomplete	20%	2			10%	1	30%	3									7.50%	6
Secondary completed			10%	1	30%	3	20%	2	30%	3	20%	2			40%	4	18.80%	15
Secondary professional education	10%	1	50%	5	20%	2	20%	2			20%	2	20%	2	10%	1	18.80%	15
University degree incomplete	10%	1	10%	1	10%	1			60%	6			10%	1			12.50%	10
University degree	60%	6	30%	3	30%	3	20%	2	10%	1	60%	6	70%	7	50%	5	41.30%	33
Total	100%	10	100%	10	100%	10	100%	10	100%	10	100%	10	100%	10	100%	10	100.00%	80
Employment Situation																		
Self employed	10%	1			10%	1											2.50%	2
Employed full time at one job	20%	2	40%	4	50%	5	20%	2			50%	5	40%	4			27.50%	22
Regularly employed part- time at one job					10%	1			10%	1			10%	1	10%	1	5.00%	4
Temporary work, which is unpredictable	20%	2	20%	2									20%	2			7.50%	6
Work at home only					20%	2											2.50%	2
Student	20%	2							50%	5					40%	4	13.80%	11
Pensioner							50%	5									6.30%	5
Military service			10%	1					20%	2			20%	2			6.30%	5
Not currently employed	30%	3	20%	2	10%	1	30%	3	10%	1	30%	3	10%	1	10%	1	18.80%	15
Never employed			10%	1					10%	1	20%	2			40%	4	10.00%	8
Total	100%	10	100%	10	100%	10	100%	10	100%	10	100%	10	100%	10	100%	10	100.00%	80

Definitions:

All participants must have been eligible to vote in the 1999 Parliamentary elections.

V = Voter: someone who has voted in at least three national elections since 1991, and in at least one of the local elections during this time period.

NV = Non-Voter: someone who has voted in less than three national elections since 1991. It was desired to have a range of non-voters for each NV group. Each group should include those who have voted in no elections, those who have voted in only national but not local elections, and those who have voted in only a few national elections but have voted in local elections.

M/F = mixed group with males and females.

The organizers were instructed to draw people from a wide geographic area within each location, and to provide a range of people from different education and income groups.

2. *The USAID National Opinion Survey, 1999.* During November-December 1999, the Armenian Sociological Association carried out a national public opinion poll studying Armenian citizens' participation in several types of elections. The survey was done as a face-to-face interview in 100 primary sampling points across Armenia. The survey sample included 13 cities and 33 villages from all 11 marzes, for a total of 1,000 interviews with adults, 18 years of age and above. The second author of this report designed and directed the project. Further details of this study are available through USAID.

3. *The Electoral List Verification Study, May 2000.* Local elections were held 25 May 2000 in four districts in Armenia. IFES decided to use this opportunity to verify the accuracy of the Voters' Lists. These lists are prepared for the elections. A brief public opinion poll was designed to learn two simple pieces of information: One, were the names of voters correctly entered on the list? Two, if not, did voters know the correct procedures to remedy this problem? Three electoral districts in Yerevan were chosen for a brief "exit survey" on Election Day: Arabkir, Malatia-Sebastia and Nork-Marash-Erebuni. (A fourth district in Lori region was not chosen due to time restrictions.) Each of these districts has approximately the same number of voters and electoral precincts. Five precincts were then randomly chosen within each district for the interviews. Twenty-five interviews were completed in each, for a total of 125 interviews for each district (N = 375). Please contact IFES Armenia for further information about this research.

4. *The Survey of Election Officials in Armenia, IFES 1998.* In order to learn more about the perceptions and needs of electoral officials, in 1998 IFES Armenia carried out research among persons who had previously worked as election officials. Eight regions (Marzes) were selected as primary points for 120 interviews conducted between October 28, 1998 and November 5, 1998. In most cases, these regions were selected to provide a wide geographic variety, such as that between the country's center of Yerevan and the most remote settlements in Armenia (Syunik). Also sought for this study was the widest possible range for patterns of electoral behavior. Some

marzes were selected because they had many reports of electoral irregularities, while others were specifically chosen for their reputations of running smooth elections and adjudicating violations of the electoral code in accordance with international standards. The first author of this report designed and directed the project. The second author directed the Armenian Sociological Association group which carried out the field work for the research. Please contact IFES for further details of this study.

Appendix One: Focus Group Discussion Guide

IFES ARMENIA
DISCUSSION GUIDE
FOR FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS

DRAFT 8 MAY 2000

8 May, 2000

Election Research May 2000

DISCUSSION GUIDE

I. Introduction and Self-Completed Questionnaire (25 minutes)

1. Purpose of the Group Discussion

The International Foundation For Election Systems (IFES) works in Armenia in cooperation with the Armenian government to support elections. The purpose of this project is to learn about people's attitudes toward the elections. We are especially interested in reasons why people do not vote. First, we wish you to complete a short questionnaire we have prepared. Please take about 10 minute to complete this.

2. Self-Completed Questionnaire (15 minutes total)

Pass out the self-completed questionnaire.

3. Introduction of Participants

Ask participants to introduce themselves, tell where they live, and their age. Tell them that we are videotaping the discussion so we can better understand their comments, and ask them to speak loudly and clearly. Repeat again that we do not need to know their full names, and that no one will be able to know what they said or wrote in this group meeting.

II. Experience with Elections (20 minutes)

Today we will talk about the political situation today in Armenia. Before we talk about today, let us look back over the last 10 years and think briefly about what has happened here since then.

*** 1991 Referendum for Independence**

Does anyone here remember the September 1991 referendum in which we voted for independence? How many people, what percent, supported independence? [ASK FOR ESTIMATES, TRY TO GET A CONSENSUS] What about voter participation? How many people do you think turned out to vote in this referendum? [ASK FOR ESTIMATES, TRY TO GET A CONSENSUS]

How many here voted in this election? [COUNT HANDS] Why/Why not? What was the feeling to vote then?

*** 1996 Presidential Election**

Let us move ahead a few years to the 1996 Presidential Elections. Do you remember how many people came to vote in this election? [ASK FOR ESTIMATES, TRY TO GET A CONSENSUS]

How many here voted in this election? [COUNT HANDS] What was the feeling to vote then? [For those who voted] Were there any problems in this election? What were they? Did you personally experience any problems with voting in this election? What were they? What about the list of voters? What do you remember about this?

*** 1998 Presidential Election**

What about the 1998 Presidential Election? What do you think the opinion is about how those elections were conducted? What do you think most Armenians would say about this election? Was it well organized? Fair?

Who voted in this election? [COUNT HANDS] What was your personal experience? Did you experience any problems, personally? What about the lists of voters?

*** 1999 Parliamentary Elections**

We have just held parliamentary elections. What do you think most Armenians would say about this last election? How many participated in the vote? [ASK FOR ESTIMATES, TRY FOR CONSENSUS] Why do you think many people did not vote? Did you vote? [COUNT HANDS] What about the voter lists? Was there any problem?

*** Summary of Elections**

Let us think about all of these elections. Has there been any change over the years in how these elections are carried out? What do you think most Armenians would say? What do you think most international authorities would say? Is there a difference, why?

What about participation in the elections? Has there been any change or pattern over these years? Why? What are the main reasons for people not to vote? Is it important for people to vote? What would be the important reasons for you to vote?

III. Political leadership (20 minutes)

What about the political situation here in Armenia? Would you say that Armenia is a democracy?

What does it mean to you to live in a democracy?

National Leadership (courts, parliament, executive, election officials). On the national level we have courts, parliament, the office of the presidency, election officials.

* Confidence. Which of these do you have the most confidence in? Why?

* Representative ness. Do these national officials represent you and the interests of your family? What do this mean to you? How would they do this?

* Responsiveness to constituents. What does the concept constituency mean to you? Does this concept relate to these national offices and officials? Is this political concept understood by politicians here in Armenia? How would this be realized?

Local Leadership (marz and local level). What is the role of local leadership here in Armenia? How do local officials affect your life?

* Confidence. How much confidence do you have in local officials?

* Representative ness. Do local officials represent you and the interests of your family? How would they do this?

* Responsiveness to constituents. Refer again to the concept of constituency. Is this political concept related to local officials?

Comparison between National and Local Leadership. How do the two levels compare? Are they similar people? Different? Which level of leadership do you have more confidence in? Why? Which level represents you better? Why?

Whose interest does your national leaders represent? Whose interest does your local leaders represent?

SHOW LIST OF ISSUES IN ARMENIA, ATTACHMENT. Please look at this list of issues. Which of these are you the most satisfied with? Which are you the least satisfied with? Which should be the main priority for our political leaders?

IV. NGOs (15 minutes). Let us consider NGOs. NGOs are groups which are independent of government, but which are active in social and political life. Examples of these include environmental groups, women's organizations, and other groups with special interests.

* Awareness of different ones. Which organizations such as these do you know of? Which are they?

* Role of NGOs in society, personal life. How important are such groups in solving the problems that face the country now? How important are such groups to you personally?

* What do you think of when you think of groups such as these? Are these new types of organizations? Are these similar to other organizations common in the past? How? What is the difference?

* Who would join such groups? Would you join such a group? Why/why not?

V. Corruption (15 minutes)

Now we will talk briefly about corruption in Armenia life. How large a role does corruption have here in Armenia? Where is it worse? Is there anywhere free of corruption?

In research from 1996, a majority of people said that official corruption is very common, and a very serious problem. Think about 1996, does this assessment accurately describe the situation in 1996?

What about today, what percentage would say that official corruption is very common today? [ASK FOR ESTIMATES, TRY FOR CONSENSUS] What percentage would say that official corruption is a very serious problem today? [ASK FOR ESTIMATES, TRY FOR CONSENSUS]

Which institutions are worse than others? Council of Ministers, government officials, Central Bank, private entrepreneurs, foreign companies operating in Armenia?

Does anyone benefit from corruption? How?

What is the future for corruption here in Armenia?

Should the government focus on this issue? Would you support such a program?

VI. Voter apathy (10 minutes)

Let us return again to the question of participation in elections.

* Perception: What is the opinion of Armenians? Do people here think that there is a problem with people not voting? Why/why not?

* Reasons for it. Why do many people decide not to vote? [ASK INDIVIDUALS, TRY TO GET A CONSENSUS ON THE MAIN POINTS]

* Suggestions. What can be done about this? [ASK FOR SUGGESTIONS, TRY TO GET A CONSENSUS ABOUT WHICH ARE THE BEST SUGGESTIONS, SECOND, THIRD, AND SO ON.] Should elections be held on other days than Sunday? Are there too many elections?

* Apathy Among Young

Do you think young people today are prepared to participate in elections at the age of 18?

What type of information is provided to young people to encourage them to vote? Is it effective?

[FOR 18 – 24 YEAR OLD PARTICIPANTS ONLY] Does the election process relate to you? Do you see others your age involved and part of the election and political process? Are elections important to 18 – 24 year old people? Why?

[FOR ALL] Based on everything we said today, how important is it for people to participate in elections? How important is this to you?

Why don't young people participate in larger numbers in the elections? What do you suggest can be done to increase the involvement of young voters?

VII. Concluding Remarks (5 – 10 minutes)

What other issues are important to the topics we have covered today, but which we did not speak about?

LIST OF ISSUES IN ARMENIA

1. How economic reforms are developing
2. The social welfare system
3. The level of political freedom
4. Protection of personal rights and freedoms of citizens by the government
5. The fight against crime
6. Eliminating corruption from public life
7. The quality of health care
8. Reforming our electoral system

Appendix Two: *Self-Completed Questionnaire*

IFES ARMENIA

SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE

TO BE DEVELOPED WITH THE CEC CHAIR

8 May, 2000

IFES ARMENIA: SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE; 8 MAY 2000

IFES ARMENIA

SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE

8 May 2000

SC.1 DATE _____

SC.2 FOCUS GROUP SESSION _____

SC.2 MARZ _____

SC.3 COMMUNITY _____

IFES ARMENIA: SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE; 8 MAY 2000

IFES ARMENIA

SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE

8 May 2000

INTRODUCTION:

SECTION 1: EXPERIENCE IN ELECTIONS

SC.4 Which elections have you voted in? [MARK ALL WHICH ARE MENTIONED]

1. May 1999 Parliamentary
2. October 1998 Parliamentary By-Elections
3. March 1998 Presidential
4. September 1996 Presidential
5. July 1995 Parliamentary
6. July 1995 Referendum on Constitution
7. September 1991 Presidential
8. September 1991 Referendum on Independence
9. Local Elections October 1999
10. Local Elections November 1996

S1.5 Please think about the *most recent election* in which you voted. How well, in your opinion, did the voters understand the process of voting? Did they understand the voting process very well, well enough to vote, not very well, not at all?

1. very well
2. well enough to vote
3. not very well
4. not at all
5. did not vote in any elections
8. no answer
9. don't know

SECTION 2: POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

S2.1 In general, how interested are you in matters of politics and government?

1. Very interested
2. Somewhat interested
3. Not very interested
4. Not at all interested

S2.2 How much do you agree with the following statement: Voting gives ordinary people a chance to influence decision-making in our country.

1. disagree very much
2. disagree somewhat
3. agree somewhat
4. agree very much
8. no answer
9. don't know

SECTION 3: GENERAL SOCIAL ATTITUDES

S3.1 Are you generally satisfied or dissatisfied with the situation in Armenia?

1. generally satisfied
2. generally dissatisfied
8. no answer
9. don't know

S3.2 [RESPONDENT BOOKLET. MARK ANSWERS TO S5.3, S5.4, S5.5 IN TABLE BELOW.] Please turn to page 11 in your booklet. I am going to ask you to tell me whether you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with different institutions in our country. For each, please choose one of the following responses:

1. very satisfied
2. somewhat satisfied
3. somewhat dissatisfied
4. very dissatisfied
8. no answer
9. don't know

Please look at the first item on the list. How satisfied are you with how economic reforms are developing? [ASK THIS QUESTION FOR EACH ITEM ON THE LIST.]

1. how economic reforms are developing
2. the social welfare system
3. the level of political freedom
4. protection of personal rights and freedoms of citizens by the government
5. the fight against crime
6. the quality of health care
7. our electoral system

S3.3 Which of these things that I have just mentioned, are you the *most satisfied* with? You may mention something else if that is more important for you than those on this list. [RESPONDENTS MAY ONLY CHOOSE ONE ANSWER.]

1. how economic reforms are developing
2. the social welfare system
3. the level of political freedom
4. protection of personal rights and freedoms of citizens by the government
5. the fight against crime
6. the quality of health care
7. our electoral system

IFES ARMENIA: SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE; 8 MAY 2000

S3.4 Which of these things that I have just mentioned, are you the *most dissatisfied* with? You may mention something else if that is more important for you than those on this list. [RESPONDENTS MAY ONLY CHOOSE ONE ANSWER.]

1. how economic reforms are developing
2. the social welfare system
3. the level of political freedom
4. protection of personal rights and freedoms of citizens by the government
5. the fight against crime
6. the quality of health care
7. our electoral system

ITEM	S5.3 MARK ALL	S5.4 CHOOSE ONE	S5.5 CHOOSE ONE
1. how economic reforms are developing			
2. the social welfare system			
3. the level of political freedom			
4. protection of personal rights and freedoms of citizens by the government			
5. the fight against crime			
6. the quality of health care			
7. our electoral system			
8. OTHER			
9. OTHER			

SECTION 4: PERSONAL INFORMATION

Please tell us a little about yourself. This information will be used for analysis and comparison, only.

SC.5 Please mark your gender.

1. male
2. female

SC.7 In what year were you born?

SC.8 What was the highest level of schooling, which you completed?

1. no formal education
2. completed primary or less
3. secondary incomplete
4. secondary completed
5. secondary professional education
6. university degree incomplete
7. university degree
8. advanced degree

S4.9 What is your family situation?

1. married
2. divorced / separated
3. widowed
4. living together as married
5. single and never married
6. no answer

S4.10 What is your ethnic heritage? (Select only one)

1. Armenian
2. Russian
3. Kurd
4. Yezid
5. Assyrian
6. Other _____

S4.11 What is the main language you use at home? (Select only one)

1. Armenian
2. Russian
3. Kurd
4. Yezid

IFES ARMENIA: SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE; 8 MAY 2000

5. Assyrian

6. Other _____

S4.12 What is your current employment situation?

1. self employed
2. employed full-time at one job
3. regularly employed part-time at one job
4. regularly employed in two different jobs
5. regularly employed in more than two different jobs
6. temporary work, which is unpredictable
7. work at home only
8. student
9. pensioner
10. military service
11. not currently employed
12. never employed
98. no answer

S4.13 How would you describe the current financial situation of your family living with you?

1. very poor – we do not have enough money for the most basic needs
2. poor – we barely have enough money to buy food, we rarely buy clothes
3. modest – we have enough to eat, we occasionally buy clothes, but we have nothing left over to save
4. moderate – we have some savings
5. above average – we have savings, and can afford a lot