# ***CIVICUS Civil Society Index Rapid Assessment: Armenia Country Report***

Yerevan
2014

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| CSI | Civil Society Index |
| CSI-RA | Civil Society Index Rapid Assessment |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisation |
| FG | Focus Group |
| LG | Local Government |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| WVS | World Values Survey |

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of CVUCUC Civil Society Index Rapid Assessment, conducted in Armenia in spring 2014. The definition of civil society adopted for this study is a slightly modified CIVICUS definition. Civil society is understood as *the arena outside the family, the government structures and for-profit area, which is created by individual and collective actions, organisations and institutions to defend public interests.* The Rapid Assessment is focused on **civic participation and activism** as currently very important and under-researched aspects of Armenian civil society. The study uses secondary data as background information, and relies both on quantitative (survey) and qualitative (expert interviews and focus group discussions) primary data.

Although data from other surveys suggest that overall trust towards NGOs in Armenia is declining, the study shows that charitable and humanitarian organisations and environmental organisations enjoy the confidence of the majority of the population. Moreover, levels of confidence have slightly increased as compared to 2009. Seemingly, while the overall trust is on decline, specific organisations are successful in fighting an uphill battle, and improving their positive public image.

Two thirds of the respondents do not participate in CSO or community activities. Those who do, report being rather satisfied. Membership in voluntary associations and organisations is very low: about nice percent of the population report being members of political parties, membership in other types of organisations is five percent and less. Overall, three quarters of survey respondents are not members of any organisation. Doing unpaid voluntary work for organisations is even less common: 14% of the population report doing unpaid voluntary work for at least one organisation.

While overall most people believe it is important for them to be involved in decisions that affect their life, political participation in Armenia is low: one fifth of the population reports having signed a petition, which is the most common type of political action. The potential for such participation remains low as well: for all the types of political activities asked in the survey (petitions, demonstrations, etc.) percentages of people, saying they would never do it, are consistently higher than percentages of people saying they might do it, or have done it. In other words the ‘refuses’ are more numerous than the ‘doers’ and the ‘might doers.’ However, the good news is that, low as it is, political participation seems to be on the rise in Armenia as compared to 2009.

While most of the Armenian population does not engage in civil society organisations and activities, those who are involved, maintain their involvement on a fairly regular basis. Most of those, who engage in voluntary activities, do so at least once a month. On average, volunteers spend around six to eight hours per month engaged in activities of their respective groups and organisations. About 18% of respondents report donating money or goods to groups and organisations mentioned in the survey. Members and volunteers of organisations are more likely

to make charitable contributions than non-members. When donating, most people are motivated by the idea of philanthropy, feelings of self-fulfilment or self-esteem, and a sense of reciprocity.

The most common reason for becoming a member of a voluntary association is an expectation of improved career possibilities, followed by a feeling of self-fulfilment. Self-reported motivations for joining organisations, or volunteering for them, differ, depending on the type of the group. Labour unions are more appealing to those who join with expectations of benefits; religious organisations are at the other end of the spectrum, attracting mostly people who are motivated by their feelings and wishes to contribute, rather than to benefit. The most commonly mentioned reason for not joining organisations is lack of time followed by a lack of interest.

Most people in Armenia are sceptical about impact of civil society. The majority (54%) are of the opinion that civil society has either limited or no impact in addressing social issues. People are even more sceptical about civil society's impact on policy making: 58% think that civil society has limited or no impact on policy making. According to expert interviews, civil society in Armenia is heavily influenced by the priorities of the international development organizations. On the policy level the impact of civil society sector has been negligible. The potential of the sector has been mostly directed at the elimination of consequences rather than root causes. Focus group discussion participants were more inclined to see impact of CSOs in a broader sense: they consider it important that few success cases of recent civic activism lead to strengthening of civil society overall. With each registered success civil society becomes more self-reliant and demanding.

A large group of 44% of respondents do not use new technology to actively participate in society. The second largest group (41%) uses social networks such as Facebook and its Russian counterpart Odnoklassniki. According to the experts and focus group participants alike there is a considerable growth in the use of new technologies by civil society in the recent years. Young people are particularly adept at using these, and are good targets for civil society online activities aimed at mobilisation. However there is a need for training CSOs and civic groups in using these tools more effectively. New social media has drawbacks as well: there is a tendency of transferring the real struggle from offline to online platforms.

# I. CIVIL SOCIETY INDEX RAPID ASSESSMENT PROJECT AND APPROACH

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Civil society is generally understood as a sphere of social activities and organisations outside the state, the market and the private sphere, which is based on principles of voluntarism, pluralism and tolerance and where people jointly pursue shared or public interests (Anheier 2004; Diamond 1999; Salamon, Sokolowski, and List 2003; Salamon 1990). In the second part of the 20th century and particularly in the 21st century civil society is increasingly perceived as one of the main players both on national and on the international arenas: a player that has the potential and the responsibility to voice the concerns of under-represented stakeholders, to channel grassroots initiatives and to counterbalance powerful top-down forces, be it governments, international business corporations or other entities. There is a growing need to better understand the variety of diverse organisational types and activities subsumed under civil society around the globe, assess capacities, diagnose problems faced by civil societies of various countries and design credible solutions for strengthening civil society worldwide.

The Civil Society Index (CSI) is a participatory action-research project assessing the state of civil society in countries around the world, which contributes to this need of improved knowledge of civil society by taking a creative approach of involving civil society organisations into the research process. The CSI is initiated and implemented by, and for, civil society organisations at the country level, in partnership with CIVICUS World Alliance for Citizen Participation.[1]

### *1.1. Changing Realities and Pressing Needs*

CIVICUS CSI has its origins in the 1997 *New Civic Atlas* publication by CIVICUS, which presented profiles of civil societies in 60 countries. The first version of CSI methodology was developed by CIVICUS with the help of Dr. Helmut Anheier, who introduced an innovative holistic way of assessing various dimensions of civil society (Anheier 2004). A pilot study was carried out in 2000; the first full-fledged CSI assessment was carried out in 53 countries in 2003-2006, after which the methodology was further refined. The second stage of CSI was implemented in 41 countries in 2008-2010 (Hakobyan et al. 2010).

Based on the findings of the two waves of CSI, CIVICUS acknowledges the diversity and the volatility of civil society in different countries and what it describes as "...flux and disconnect, with the paradigms that shaped definitions of civil society and relations between state, market, media, civil society and other social actors in the late 20th century all coming into renewed questioning." (CIVICUS 2012). Civil society needs a self-assessment tool that is more flexible, less time-consuming and more easily adaptable both to the local context and to the fast changing reality of the 21st century. In response to this need CIVUCS created a new Civil Society Rapid

[1] More information is available online at http://civicus.org/index.php/en/

Assessment tool with an aim of better understanding and supporting the variety of most urgent needs of individual countries.

### *1.2. About the CSI-RA*

CIVICUS Civil Society Index Rapid Assessment (CSI-RA) project intends to support civil society self-assessments in order to enhance the strength and sustainability of civil society for a positive social change. Its main purpose is to help civil society to better assess its own challenges, potentials and needs in a range of different situations and contexts, contributing to strengthening the evidence base for civil society advocacy; providing a platform for civil society to identify shared needs; and assisting the planning and strategizing of civil society around common challenges and opportunities. It is a flexible tool that helps measure the state of civil society in any given context. In line with the overall CIVICUS CSI philosophy, CSI-RA emphasises inclusiveness, participation and local ownership of civil society in the process of assessment implementation.

## 2. CSI-RA IMPLEMENTATION

Counterpart International Armenia (referred to as 'Counterpart' in the rest of the report) is the local implementing partner of the CSI-RA. In accordance with the principles of participation and inclusiveness of civil society in the process of assessment, Counterpart involved a number of key stakeholders at several stages of the process.

To identify the main problematic areas facing the civil society sector in Armenia an adaptation workshop was conducted in Yerevan on January 29, 2014, involving prominent civil society representatives selected based on their sectorial representation and mission (advocacy organizations, service providers, think thanks, policy watchdog organizations, etc.). The participants discussed the definition of civil society, using the 2010 CIVUCS definition as the starting point and opted to slightly modify the wording in following way:

> *The arena outside the family, the government structures and for-profit area, which is created by individual and collective actions, organisations and institutions to defend public interests.*[2]

Following a dynamic discussion the workshop participants chose **civic participation and activism** as the commonly agreed area of assessment in Armenia. The selected sub-areas for assessment are as follows:

- extent of engagement
- depth of engagement
- motivation for engagement
- CSOs and community impact
- activism and new technologies.

[2] CIVUCUS 2010 definition was "The arena, outside of the family, the state, and the market – which is created by individual and collective actions, organisations and institutions to advance shared interests" (Hakobyan et al. 2010).

For the purposes of this study civic participation was defined as "the extent to which individuals engage in social and policy-related initiatives through individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern."

CSI-RA in Armenia utilised both quantitative and qualitative methods of assessment. Quantitative data were collected mostly through a population survey, although additional secondary data was added to the analysis to provide a broader perspective. Qualitative data was generated through focus group discussions and expert interviews. The overall assessment methodology and the specific methodology tools (survey questionnaire and focus group discussion guide) were discussed and modified accordingly during the advisory group meeting on March 10, 2014 which involved prominent civil society and donor community representatives.

A nationwide representative **survey** of adult Armenian residents was conducted with 1579 adult residents of Armenia. The fieldwork was carried out in March and April 2014. The sampling methodology was a replication of 2009 population survey carried out within the framework of CSI Armenia study (Hakobyan et al. 2010). Proportionate to population stratified random sampling was used with the addresses of private electricity users as the sampling frame. The confidence interval is 95%. The distribution of the Marzes (regions) is presented in the Appendix. The questionnaire contained replication questions from 2009 in order to enable a longitudinal comparison, as well as a set on new questions to address the new areas of assessment identified during the adaptation workshop. The data was entered into SPSS.

For the purpose of conducting **focus group discussions** civil society organizations, community groups and non-formal civic groups were selected from the whole country proportionately representing Yerevan, central, northern and southern Marzes of Armenia. The discussion groups represented all urban/rural, centre/periphery, affluent/poorer regions. On the basis of the list of types of civil society organisations/groups developed by CIVICUS a range of organisation types and characteristics were included. The focus groups were heterogeneous: consisting of 80% civil society (both formal and informal civil society representatives) and 20% other sector stakeholders, including representatives from the business sector, the government, the media and the academia. Three regional focus group meetings were held in the last week of March[3] with approximately 15-20 participants each, ensuring a total of 55 respondents. Focus group discussions were conducted in Armenian.

The results of the study were discussed at a national validation workshop that took place in Yerevan on June 24, 2014 and included a large number of participants from civil society organisations, community groups and donor organisations.

[3] In Goris, Vanadzor and Armavir towns

## II. NATIONAL CONTEXT

Armenia is a tiny (29,000 sq. km) landlocked country in the South Caucasus, with a population of about three million people, more or less equally distributed between the capital city of Yerevan, other urban areas, and rural settlements. Geographically belonging to Asia, Armenians usually think of themselves as being 'at the crossroads' of Europe and Asia, with cultural ties to European civilization dating back to Antique and Byzantine time periods. Ethnically homogenous (97% ethnic Armenians) the Armenian society is a mix of modern and patriarchal elements (such as for example 99% literacy rate on one hand and strong rejection of homosexualism on the other hand). A seven million strong Diaspora spread throughout the World is an important component of the current social and political reality. Armenia is characterized by the World Bank as a "lower middle income" country, with GDP of about $10 billion and about one-third of the population below the official poverty line (World Bank 2014).

Previously one of the 15 Soviet Republics, Armenia gained independence in 1991. The transition took a very heavy toll the Armenian economy and the society at large, as its fabric was rapidly changing to adjust. To add to the hardships, Armenia saw its borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan closed, and faced a blockade imposed on it as a result of a military strife with Azerbaijan over an Armenian-populated enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh: previously an autonomous region of Soviet Azerbaijan, which opted for joining Armenia in last years of Soviet Union. After the first few very difficult years of its independent existence, Armenia's political environment had stabilized and remained relatively stable since the1994 ceasefire which ended the Nagorno-Karabakh war and transferred the conflict into its current "frozen" stage. The new Armenian political elite consolidated its power and faced little challenge or opposition. The stability has failed to translate into democratisation and good governance though. Freedom House "Freedom in the World" reports have characterised Armenia as "partially free" since 1991 with slight variations in the scores but no major changes or trends in either direction (Freedom House 2013).

In addition to struggling economy and widespread poverty, corruption is a serious problem that undermines state capacity and hinders development in almost any aspect of life in Armenia (Stefes 2006). Corruption Perception Index by Transparency International ranks Armenia as 94th out of 177 countries, with a score of 36 on a scale from zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean) (Transparency International 2013).

## III. CIVIL SOCIETY IN ARMENIA

Armenian civil society is a fairly typical case of a "post-communist" civil society. Problems of post-communist civil society can be divided into two broad categories. The first category is about individual attitudes and behaviour of citizens: disdain towards volunteering, distrust towards associations, and low membership in associations (Howard 2003). These are mostly a legacy of communism, under which people were forced to join organisations and 'volunteer' on a regular basis. The second category of problems of post-communist civil society has to do with a rapid donor-driven development of the CSOs in these countries after the collapse of the Soviet

Union. Manifold challenges of regime transitions, often accompanied with an economic collapse, created the demand for social action, while generous international donor support boosted the supply. This led to mushrooming of CSOs heavily dependent on external donors (Ishkanian 2008). While this helped establish a seemingly vibrant CSO sector, it created a set of constrains CSOs currently struggle with. Organizational sustainability of most CSOs in case of withdrawal of international developmental aid is questionable. More importantly, a legitimate ability of civil society organisations to represent local voices is often disputed on the grounds that many CSOs are funded from abroad. Armenian civil society exemplifies both types of problems most other post-communist civil societies have to face.

While it is possible to trace the history of Armenian civil society far back into the past (Hakobyan et al. 2010), this report outlines the most recent history of Armenian civil society development because of its importance and impact on the current state of civil society, which is until now affected by the communist legacy and its rapid donor-driven development of the first decade after the 1991 independence.

In the Soviet Union and other countries of the Soviet led socialist block civil society was severely curtailed. The domain between the market, the state and the private life was almost non-existent because of the nature of the regime: the state controlled most of social life and even made inroads into private life. The state also assumed the responsibility for welfare provision, thus filling in one of the niches often occupied by CSOs in other types of regimes. At the same time a plethora of officially controlled and organized associations existed in the Soviet Union. People were encouraged and at times even forced into those organisations.

In the late 1980s a gradual opening of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of the communist bloc created new opportunities for formal associational activates outside of state control. CSOs started to appear. In early 1990s the process sped up to a point of being referred to as "mushrooming of NGOs" or an organisational boom (Voicu and Voicu 2003). With the collapse of the communism, CSOs became one of the many new things that democratisation and 'westernisation' brought to the region.

With 'glasnost' and 'perestroika' declared in the Soviet Union new opportunities of associational life were created and taken advantage of in Armenia as well. In the late 1980s and early 1990s first CSOs called Public organizations in Armenian,[4] were established. Environmental protection was among the first issues that more or less organized citizen groups advocated at the time. As a response to a devastating earthquake of 1988, which claimed lives of about 45,000 and left 500,000 homeless, voluntary groups and organizations for humanitarian assistance and relief were formed. War in Nagorno-Karabakh, refugees and severe economic crisis added to the scope of tasks undertaken by newly formed CSOs. Local grassroots response to earthquake, refugee influx and growing poverty was stimulated by examples of foreign benevolent organizations that were providing humanitarian assistance to the county. International NGOs began to work in Armenia in 1990 and also served as example organizations (Blue, Payton, and Kharatyan 2001).

[4]"Non-Governmental Organization" in Armenian «Հասարակական կազմակերպություն» (Public organization)

Some authors point to this period of rapid creation of CSOs, boosted both by the international donor money and instructions on how to organize their operations, as a source of some of the current problems of Armenian civil society. Ishkhanian (2008) argues that "NGOization" has led to de-politicization and taming of the emancipatory potential of civil society. Proliferation of Western-type NGOs crowded out endogenous forms of civic participation and association, thus in fact undermining genuine civil society development since many NGOs exist purely for the pursuit of acquiring international funding (Ishkanian 2008).

Despite that hundreds of CSOs mushroomed after independence, their ability to represent public interest, their impact on public decision-making and their sustainability are questionable. CSOs in their initial stages were created by members of social and political elite with the financial support of western funding and charitable organizations (Dudwick 1995). Most CSOs remained small and heavily controlled by the founder; who was often a strong charismatic personality who set the agenda and lead fundraising efforts (Danielyan 2001). The over-reliance on the founding leader continued to remain a problem, hindering civil society institutionalisation until recently (and some would argue that this issue is still a problem). A study by Blue and Ghazaryan (2004) points to the lack of leadership transition from the founding president to an individual selected by an independent board or by the members as one of the main weaknesses of the Armenian CSO sector. Many prominent CSOs are regarded as 'one person show' organisations that would fall apart if the current leader were to depart.

An important new development in Armenia is the recent rise of a new type of activities called 'civic initiatives.' These are various issue-oriented horizontally structured groups of individual activists united around a common, often very specific, cause (a prevention of construction in a public park, preservation of an architecturally valuable building, protests against a new mine and so on). These new forms of civic participation have emerged in 2008, registered a number of victories since then (Ishkanian et al. 2013), and are by now an important element of Armenian civil society. The core activists are usually young educated people; they use social media extensively to organize and spread information regarding their activities.

Thus, Armenian civil society after 20 years of post-communist development is a curious mix of achievements and failures. The overall assessment of Armenian civil society by international organisations such as USAID and Freedom House depicts it as partially developed, with no major upward or downward trends (Habdank-Kolaczkowska, Machalek, and Walker 2012; USAID 2012). It has a relatively strong level of organization but low civic engagement and weak impact (Hakobyan et al. 2010). The Armenian CSO sector is described as donor driven (Blue and Ghazaryan 2004) to the extent of becoming artificial (Ishkanian 2008). Public trust towards CSOs is low (Paturyan and Gevorgyan 2014a). There have also been studies highlighting positive aspects of Armenian civil society, such as high levels of trust in small rural communities (Babajanian 2008) and high potential for informal volunteering (Hakobyan and Tadevosyan 2010). Overall the organisational sector of civil society can be described as fairly institutionalized but detached from the broader public. On the other hand there is a visible rise in civic activism, particularly among the youth, which is not channelled through formal

organisations but is often spontaneous, horizontally structured and short-term. The new and old elements of civil society are currently in the process of adapting to each other's presence and testing out cooperation strategies.

# IV. ANALYSIS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

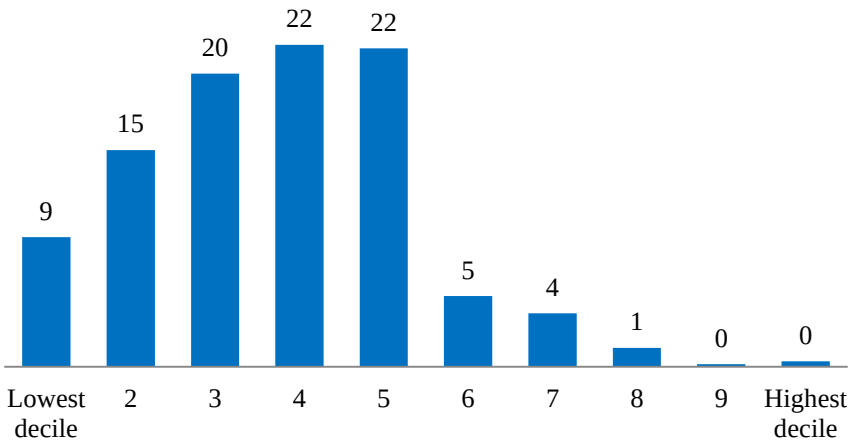
## 1. OVERALL SURVEY RESULTS

*Note: the decimal points in most of the tables and graphs are rounded for the ease of use and visual representation; .5 decimals are rounded up (i.e. 3.5 is rounded up to 4). This explains why in some of the tables the reported percentages do not seem to add up to 100.*

### *1.1. Introducing survey respondents: the demographics*

About one third of the respondents live in small settlements of up to 5,000 inhabitants, 36% of the respondents are from large settlements of more than 500,000 people. When asked to assess their household income as compared to other households in the country, two thirds (67%) of the respondents place themselves on four lowest deciles (see Figure 1 below), skewing the self-reported income to the lower end of the spectrum. Most people report earning between 20,000 and 100,000 AMD per month ($50 to $250). The gender distribution of the respondents is: 38% male and 64% female. The average age of the respondents is 46 years. Most respondents have either a school level of education (37%) or a college or technical school degree (32%). See Appendix for the details on personal monetary monthly income and additional demographic information.

**Figure 1: In what group your household is, %**

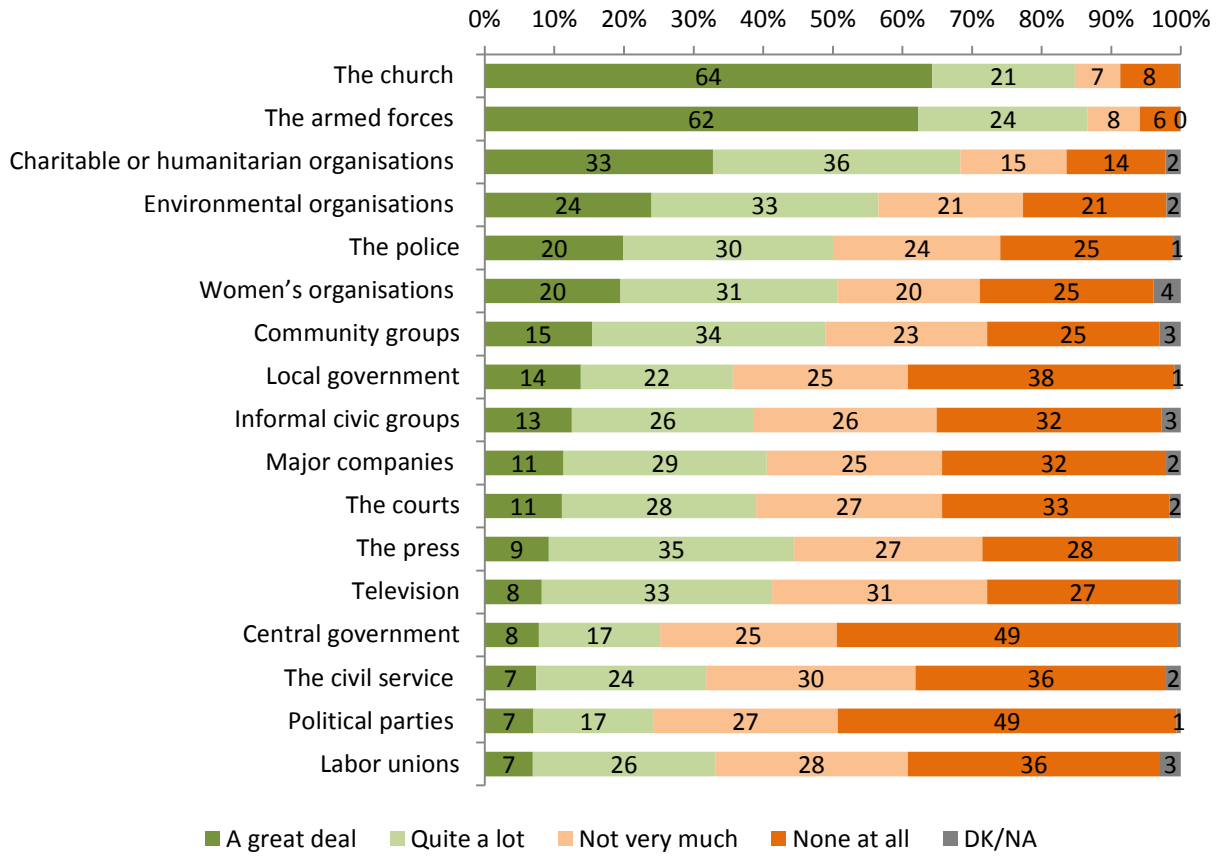



### *1.2. General attitudes towards CSOs.*

This section of the report discusses general public attitudes that shape the political culture in which Armenian CSOs operate. Survey respondents have various levels of confidence in organisations and social institutions; it is helpful to know how well CSOs perform in relation to other institutions in the eyes of the Armenian public. The church, the armed forces, charitable

and humanitarian organisations and environmental organisations enjoy the confidence of the majority of the population. This is the first good news for civil society: two of its elements outperform most governmental structures and other social institutions. See Figure 2 below for the details.

**Figure 2: Confidence in institutions**

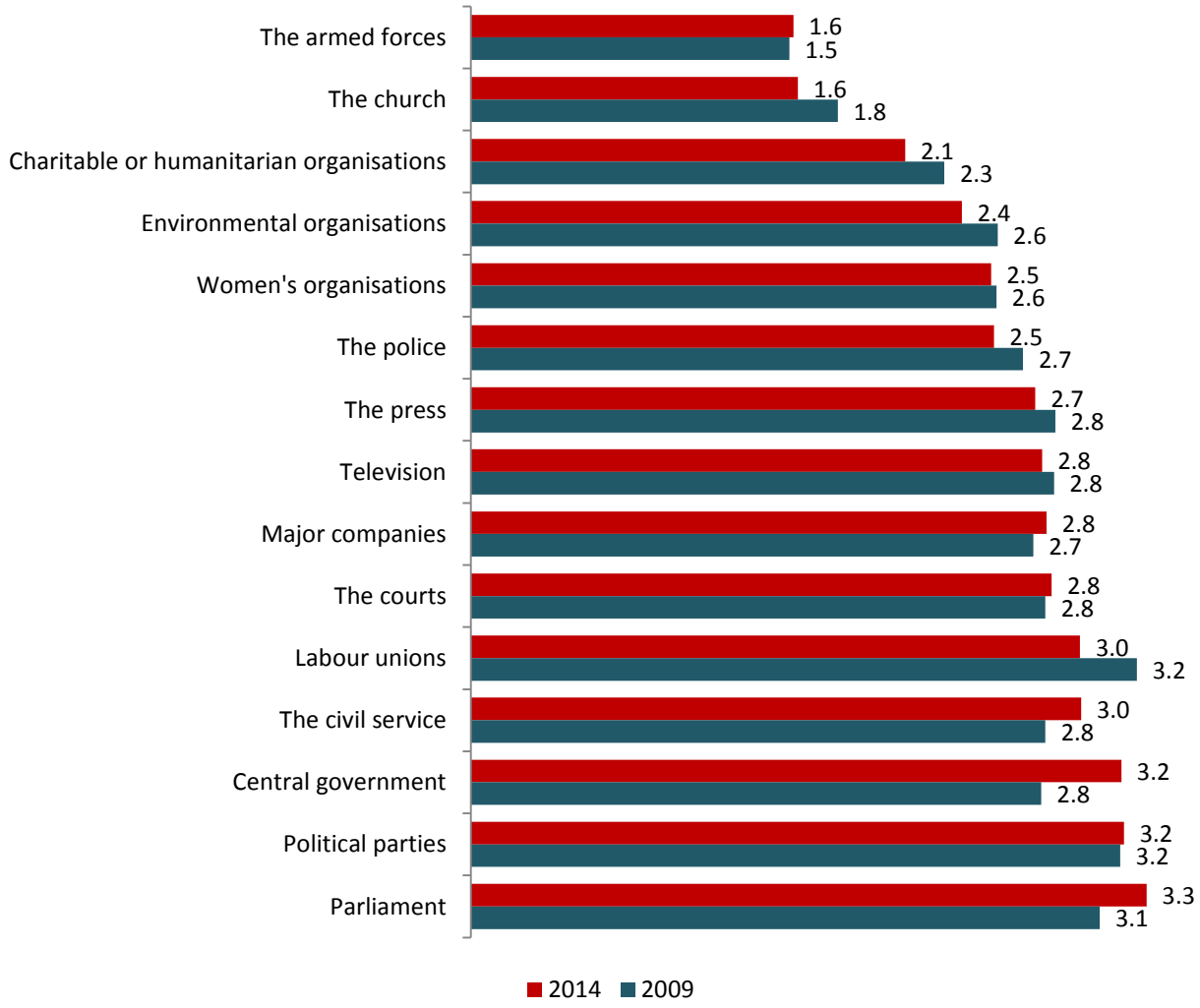



The second good news for civil society is that the level of confidence in CSOs seems to be growing. When compared to the results of the same question asked in 2009, it becomes clear that all three types of CSOs: environmental organisations, women's organisations and charitable or humanitarian organisations experience an increase in popular confidence levels. Figure 3 below plots the average rating for each organisation, on the scale from 1 (a great deal of confidence) to 4 (none at all) for all the institutions for which comparative data is available.[5] Somewhat counterintuitively for an Armenian reader, lower scores mean better performance; subsequently lower scores as compared to 2009 mean increased confidence in the institution. The graph shows that eight out of 15 institutions: the church, the charitable and humanitarian organisations, environmental organisations, women's organisations, the police, the press, the television, and the labour unions have experienced an increase in confidence to a varying degree; the remaining seven institutions have experiences a setback. The greatest gain in confidence was recorded for

[5] Local government, community groups and informal civic groups were not included in 2009 survey.

the labour unions (a 0.28 difference in the mean score) while the greatest setback was experienced by the parliament (-0.23 difference in the mean scores).

**Figure 3: Average confidence in institution on a scale from 1 (a great deal of confidence) to 4 (none at all)**




In order to make sure that the increase in the overall confidence towards the three types of SCOs is not a fluctuation within a margin of error Table 1 below presents the answers for both 2009 and 2014 in more detail.

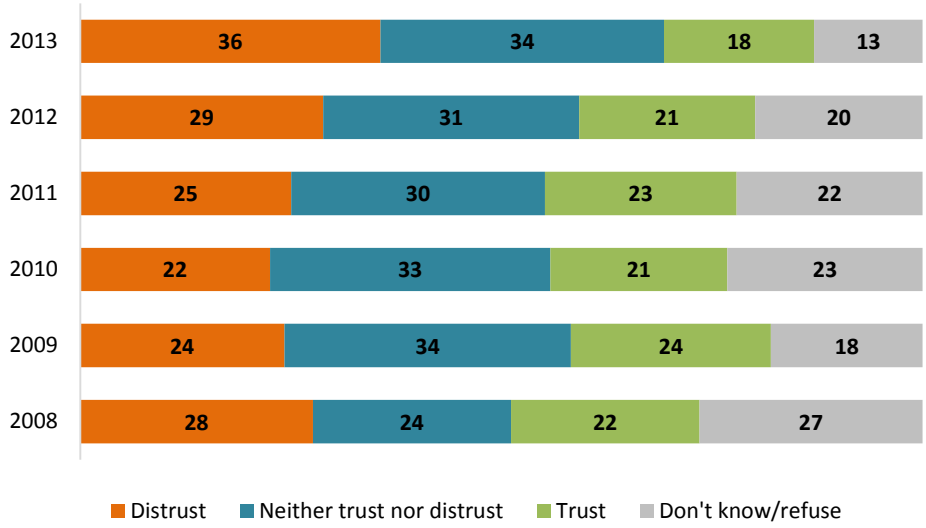
**Table 1: Confidence in CSOs 2009 and 2014, %**

| | A great deal | Quite a lot | Not very much | None at all | DK/NA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Women's organisations | | | | | |
| 2009 | 19 | 27 | 24 | 24 | 6 |
| 2014 | 20 | 31 | 20 | 25 | 4 |
| Charitable or humanitarian organisations | | | | | |
| 2009 | 27 | 31 | 24 | 16 | 2 |
| 2014 | 33 | 36 | 15 | 14 | 2 |
| Environmental organisations | | | | | |
| 2009 | 17 | 29 | 30 | 21 | 2 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2014 | 24 | 33 | 21 | 21 | 2 |

Thus, it is clear that those CSOs mentioned in the survey perform relatively well in the eyes of the public, in terms of confidence in institutions. However, it must be noted that other survey data points to a worrying evidence of decline of trust towards NGOs over the past few years. Caucasus Barometer[6] shows that the percentage of people who trust NGOs decreased from 22% in 2008 to 18% in 2013, while the percentage of those who distrusted NGOs increased from 28% to 36%. There is also an increase among those who have a neutral attitude (from 24% to 35%, while the number of people who did not give an answer has shrank from 27% to 13%. Clearly people are becoming more opinionated (as the 'don't know' group shrinks); unfortunately their opinion is less favourable of the NGO sector in general, than it used to be a few years ago, as Figure 4 below demonstrates.

**Figure 4: Trust towards NGOs, Caucasus Barometer, %**




Source: Caucasus Barometer, Caucasus Research Resources Centres, http://www.crrccenters.org

These two seemingly contradictory findings – the increase of public confidence in women's, humanitarian and environmental organisations on one hand, and the overall decrease of trust towards the NGO sector on the other hand – is an issue worth further exploration. It seems that the overall somewhat abstract notion of an 'NGO' is losing its appeal, but specific organisations are able to gradually improve their public image.

## 2. AREAS OF ASSESSMENT

### *2.1. Extent of engagement*

As evident from Table 2 below most respondents (68%) believe that it is very important for the population to influence the decisions and actions that influence their life, either on the community or on the country level. However, these pro-participatory attitudes do not fully

[6] A yearly nationwide representative population survey carried out in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia by Caucasus Research Resources Centers. More information is available at http://www.crrccenters.org.

translate into action, as this section further demonstrates. Two thirds of the respondents do not participate in CSO or community activities. Those who do, report being rather satisfied (see Table 18 in the Appendix).

**Table 2: To what extent is it important for the population to influence the decisions/actions that may change the life in their community, city, country?**

| Response option | N | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Very important | 1079 | 68 | 81 | 81 |
| Somewhat important | 137 | 9 | 10 | 91 |
| Somewhat not important | 112 | 7 | 8 | 99.8 |
| Not important at all | 2 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 100 |
| Total Valid | 1330 | 84 | 100 | |
| No answer/Don't know | 249 | 16 | | |
| Total | 1579 | 100 | | |

CIVICUS CSI differentiates between socially-based and political engagement. The extent of engagement is measured through membership in organisations and groups, volunteering, community engagement and individual volunteering. Three out of these four elements were included in the current CSI-RA, with the exception of community engagement.

**Membership** in voluntary associations and organisations is very low in Armenia. The largest membership reported is that of political parties: about nine percent of the survey respondents are political party members. Church or religious organisations have about six percent membership; the remaining groups are below five percent. Table 3 below shows the data from the CSI-RA 2014, adding data on active membership[7] from the previous CSI study, as well as data on active membership as recorded in two waves of World Values Survey (WVS) in Armenia. Socially based organisations are highlighted in green while political organisations are highlighted in blue. Community groups and civic groups are not categorised as these two are recent additions and were not included in the original CIVUCUS CSI methodology. It can be seen from the table that active party membership and environmental organisation membership has increased (marked with a '↑' in the table below), while the numbers for all other types of membership remain fairly stable, fluctuating within a margin of error. Overall, three quarters of survey respondents are not members of any organisation, 19% report being a member of one organisation, 3.4% are members of two organisations, while very few are as active as being members of five and more organisations (see Table 19 in the Appendix).

[7] There is a slight difference in question formulation: in 2009 CSI survey and the WVS surveys the respondents were asked whether they are active members, passive members or not members at all, while in 2014 they were simply asked if they were members or not. Although the comparison needs to be treated with caution, the report presents the numbers for the active membership for 2009 CSI survey and the WVS surveys in addition to the CSI 2014 survey as a useful point of reference.

**Table 3: Membership in Organisations, %**

| | % member CSI-RA 2014 | % active member CSI 2009 | % active member WVS 2011 | % active member WVS 1997 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Political party | **8.8**↑ | **4.6** | 2.1 | 1.15 |
| Church or religious organisation | 5.8 | 5.5 | 1.3 | 1.5 |
| Art, music or educational organisation | 4.8 | 4.4 | 1.5 | 8.15 |
| Environmental organisation | **4.1**↑ | **1.2** | 0.4 | 1.15 |
| Community groups | 2.7 | - | - | - |
| Informal civic group/movement | 2.4 | - | - | - |
| Sport or recreational organisation | 2.2 | 3.5 | 1.1 | 5 |
| Humanitarian or charitable organisation | 2.2 | 2.0 | 0.8 | 1.6 |
| Professional association | 1.7 | 1.6 | 1.3 | 2.35 |
| Labour union | 1.1 | 1.4 | 0.6 | 1.25 |
| Consumer organisation | 0.4 | 0.2 | 0.4 | - |
| Other | 0.1 | 0.3 | 0.7 | 0.35 |

Doing **unpaid voluntary work** for organisations is even less common than membership: 4.3% of respondents report doing that for a church or religions organisation, the percentages for the remaining groups are close to negligible. While no WVS data is available for this variable, a comparison with CSI 2009 is possible. As Table 4 below demonstrates, no changes can be observed since 2009: fluctuations of numbers are within a margin of error. In general 14% of the population report doing unpaid voluntary work for at least one organisation, with less than 3% doing voluntary work for two or more organisations (see Table 20 in the Appendix).

It is worth mentioning here, that participants of focus group discussions highlighted that CSOs are in need of volunteers, but often not just volunteers but rather people with specific sets of skills whom they find difficult to attract: CSOs need assistance of highly skilled professionals, such as lawyers or finance specialists, to enhance their ability to analyse relevant legislation or carry out financial oversight of government spending.

**Table 4: % of respondents who do unpaid voluntary work for organisations**

| | 2014 | 2009 |
|---|---|---|
| Church or religious organisation | 4.3 | 3.7 |
| Environmental organisation | 3.1 | 2.5 |
| Art, music or educational organisation | 2.8 | 2.9 |
| Political party | 2.8 | 3.9 |
| Community groups | 2.2 | - |
| Humanitarian or charitable organisation | 2.0 | 3.6 |
| Informal civic group/movement | 1.6 | - |
| Sport or recreational organisation | 1.5 | 2.6 |
| Professional association | 1.1 | 1.7 |
| Labour Union | 0.6 | 1.2 |
| Consumer organisation | 0.3 | 0.7 |
| Other | 0 | 0.4 |

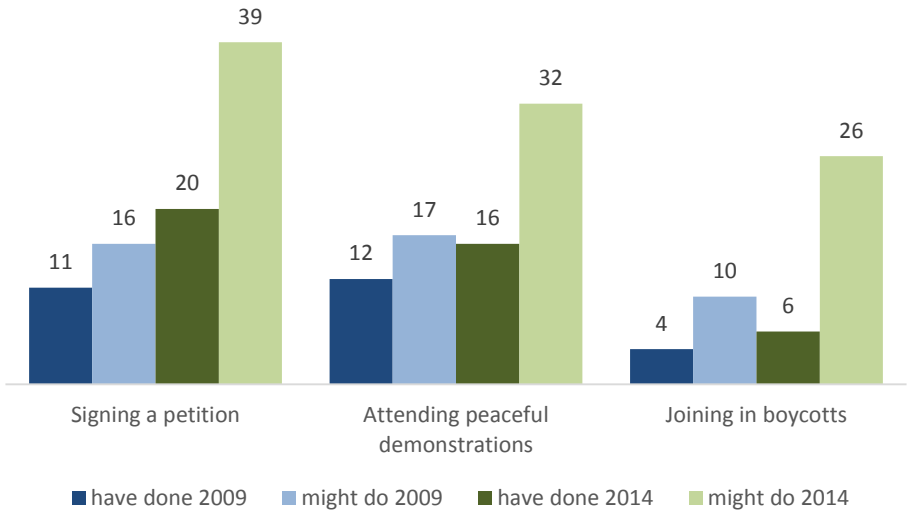
In terms of **individual activism** signing petitions and attending demonstrations are the two most popular types of political participation: 20% and 16% of respondents report having done it. However, the data show that most people would rather abstain from these types of political participation. Even for the top two frequent types of participation – petitions and peaceful demonstrations – the percentages of people, saying they would never do it, are higher than the percentages of people who report having done it. Moreover, 'would never do' attitude is stronger than 'might do' attitude. This pattern holds for all types of political activities asked in the survey: people, who say they would never do it, outweigh those who say they might do it for every single category of activities.

**Table 5: Types of political activities, 2014**

| | Have done % | Have done in the last 5 years | Might do % | Would never do % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Signing a petition | 20 | 18 | 39 | 41 |
| Attending peaceful demonstrations | 16 | 12 | 32 | 52 |
| Serving as an observer at the elections | 11 | 8.5 | 30 | 60 |
| Calling a hotline | 9 | 9 | 41 | 51 |
| Joining in boycotts | 6 | 5 | 26 | 68 |
| Submitting requests to the authorities calling to sort out the community problem | 6 | 5 | 35 | 58 |
| Submitting a request to the authorities calling for accountability | 3 | 3 | 33 | 64 |

When comparing this data with CSI 2009 survey, there is, however, a cause for optimism, because political participation is on the increase for the three types of activities included in the previous survey (other types of political participation were not included in 2009 survey). People are more inclined to sign petitions, attend peaceful demonstrations and join in boycotts, as compared to 2009. This holds true both for the numbers of people who report having done those activities and for those saying they might do it. As Figure 5 below demonstrates the percentages of people who might attend peaceful demonstrations has almost doubled, while for the other two types of political participation it has more than doubled.

**Figure 5: Types of political participation, CSI 2009 and 2014, %**




Calling a hotline seems to be the type of activity which has a potential to become more widespread. In 2014 it is the largest category among the "might do" answers, while very few people report actually doing it. This could be due to low availability of hotlines and due to the fact that many people in Armenia have experienced repeated disappointments with other types of activities listed in the survey, while hotlines so far do not seem to have a negative image of "nothing would change anyways".

### *2.2. Depth of engagement*

The depth of engagement refers to the frequency and extensiveness of people's involvement in civil society activities. While the previous section has demonstrated that most of the Armenian population does not engage in civil society organisations and activities, this section argues that those who are involved, maintain their involvement on a fairly regular basis. In this respect the findings of the previous CSI (Hakobyan et al. 2010) are re-confirmed: while the extent of engagement with CSOs in narrow, the depth of engagement is solid.

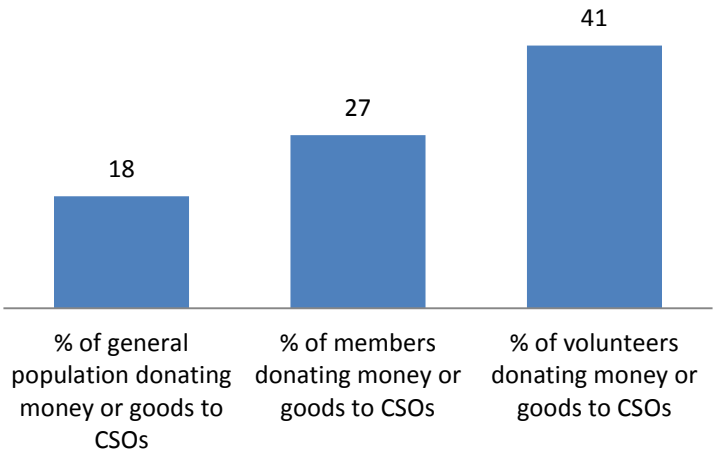
Most of those, who engage in voluntary activities, do so at least once a month (61%); the frequency of engagement in volunteering is almost equally distributed between those who volunteer once a week, once a month or once every three months (see Table 6 below). On average, volunteers spend around six to eight hours per month engaged in activities of their respective groups and organisations. The mean is 18 hours, but it is somewhat inflated due to a few outliers: three people report spending 150, 160 and 300 hours respectively. The median for this variable is six hours, which is probably a more realistic assessment of a central tendency (see Table 21 in Appendix for more details).

**Table 6: How often did you volunteer in the last 3 months?**

| Response option | N | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Every day | 19 | 1.2 | 9 | 9 |
| Once per week | 57 | 3.6 | 27 | 36 |
| Once per month | 51 | 3.2 | 25 | 61 |
| Once per three months | 49 | 3.1 | 24 | 85 |
| Have not volunteered | 32 | 2 | 15 | 100 |
| Total Valid | 208 | 13 | 100 | |
| No answer/Don't know | 9 | 0.6 | | |
| Missing value | 1362 | 83 | | |
| Total | 1579 | 100 | | |

About 18% of respondents report donating money or goods to groups and organisations mentioned in the survey. Members and volunteers of organisations are more likely to make charitable contributions than non-members, and the differences are statistically significant.[8] In the graph below those who report being a member of at least one organisation ("members") and doing unpaid voluntary work for at least one organisation ("volunteers") are compared to the general public.

**Figure 6: Donating money or goods to organisations**




Those who donate money or goods, mostly do that on a regular basis: once or twice during the past three months. There are a few outliers who claim to have made donations 50, 90 or even 100 times during the past three months. Similarly to some of the data reported above, the median of two donations in the past three months is probably a better estimate of the central tendency in this case, rather than the mean of five donations in three months (See Table 22 in the Appendix for more details). About 12% of the respondents named the amount that they donate in a typical month to SCOs. On average people donate about 3,000 AMD (an equivalent of about $7.5).[9] The mean is 21,000 AMD ($53) but it is influenced by a few large donations, the median is 3,000

[8] Chi-square tests were run for a newly created variable "member of at least one organization" and "volunteering for at least one organisation." For the first variable the results are: $X^2 = 33.016$, df = 1, $p < 0.001$. For the second variable the results are $X^2 = 97.752$, df = 1, $p < 0.001$.

[9] $1 currently equals about 400 AMD.

AMD ($7.5), the mode is 1,000 AMD ($2.5). The largest reported sums are 300,000 AMD ($750), 1,000,000 AMD ($2,500) and 1,200,000 AMD ($3,000). Table 7 below provides the details. When donating, most people are motivated by the idea of philanthropy (169 respondents mentioned this reason), feelings of self-fulfilment and/or self-esteem (43 mentions), and a sense of reciprocity (22 mentions). Other less frequent reasons include feeling of social responsibility, a desire to contribute to own community development, patriotism, previous traumatic experiences and prestige.

**Table 7: Monthly donations to organisations**

| Monthly donations | | N | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| AMD | $ | | | |
| 100 – 1,000 | 0.25 – 2.5 | 55 | 29 | 29 |
| 1,200 – 3,000 | 3 – 7.5 | 47 | 25 | 54 |
| 4,000 – 20,000 | 10 – 50 | 70 | 37 | 90 |
| 25,000 – 1,200,000 | 63 – 3000 | 19 | 10 | 100 |
| Total | | 191 | 100 | |

### *2.3. Motivation for engagement*

Survey respondents were asked why they have become members of the corresponding organisation/group. A total of 579 open-ended answers (multiple reasons permitted) were recorded and then grouped by the researchers into the categories presented in Table 8 below. The most common reason for becoming a member of a voluntary association or a group is a general expectation of improved career possibilities, followed by a feeling of self-fulfilment and self-esteem. Having friends or family members already involved with the group is the third most important motivating factor.

**Table 8: Reason for becoming a member of organisation/group (multiple responses)**

| | Count | % of Responses | % of Cases |
|---|---|---|---|
| Expectation of improved career possibilities in general | 95 | 17 | 24 |
| Self-fulfilment/self-esteem | 88 | 15 | 22 |
| Friends/family members are members | 77 | 14 | 20 |
| Feeling of belonging/desire to have such a feeling | 52 | 9 | 13 |
| Spending free time | 50 | 9 | 13 |
| Philanthropy | 48 | 8 | 12 |
| Expectation of becoming employed by organisation/group in the future | 38 | 7 | 10 |
| Non-monetary benefits, expectation of Non-monetary benefits | 37 | 7 | 9 |
| Learning/acquiring new skills, expectation of learning/acquiring new skills | 36 | 6 | 9 |
| Reciprocity | 34 | 6 | 9 |
| Other | 15 | 3 | 4 |
| Total | 570 | 100 | 145 |

Reasons for doing voluntary work were recorded similarly to that of membership reasons. The results are presented in Table 9 below. Philanthropy is the most important motivator for volunteering, expectations of improved career possibilities and the feeling of self-fulfilment are the next two important motivators, similar to the membership case.

**Table 9: Reason for doing voluntary work for organisation/group (multiple responses)**

| | Count | % of Responses | % of Cases |
|---|---|---|---|
| Philanthropy | 66 | 19 | 30 |
| Expectation of improved career possibilities in general | 56 | 16 | 26 |
| Self-fulfilment/self-esteem | 50 | 14 | 22 |
| Friends/family members are members | 44 | 13 | 20 |
| Feeling of belonging/desire to have such a feeling | 30 | 9 | 14 |
| Expectation of becoming employed by organisation/group in the future | 28 | 8 | 13 |
| Spending free time | 21 | 6 | 10 |
| Learning/acquiring new skills, expectation of learning/acquiring new skills | 21 | 6 | 10 |
| Reciprocity | 19 | 5 | 9 |
| Non-monetary benefits, expectation of Non-monetary benefits | 10 | 3 | 5 |
| Other | 7 | 2 | 3 |
| Total | 352 | 100 | 162 |

Self-reported motivations for joining organisations or volunteering for them differ, depending on the type of the group. Expectations to be hired by the organisation later on, or general expectations of improved career were among the main motivators for labour unions, professional organisations, political parties and sports or recreational organisations. Feelings of self-fulfilment and self-esteem were important motivators to join or volunteer for the church or religious organisations, art, music or educational organisations, environmental organisations, humanitarian organisations, civic groups, and, interestingly, also political parties and professional associations. Free time was an important factor for sports, community groups and civic groups; friends and family as members were important channels of recruitment for political parties and community groups. Reciprocity was particularly prominent as a motivator for becoming a civic group member. Table 10 below lists three most commonly mentioned reasons for joining each organisation.[10] Colour coding is used to distinguish between different types of motivations. Some motivations (highlighted in grey) have a rather utilitarian or instrumental character meaning that the individual anticipates some personal gains (job opportunities, career improvement, new skills, etc.) others are more related to an individual's feelings and need of social belonging: these are highlighted in blue. Availability of free time and friends' of family's role in joining associations are highlighted in green, as these seem rather neutral explanations.

[10] Consumer organisations are omitted from this analysis. Only six respondents mentioned being members and four reported doing unpaid voluntary work. Since the responses of these people as two why they joined and/or volunteered are very few and diverse, it is impossible to establish a hierarchy of importance.

**Table 10: Reasons for joining various groups or organisations**

| | Reason 1 | Reason 2 | Reason 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Church or religious organisation | Self-fulfilment/self-esteem | Feeling of belonging | Philanthropy |
| Sport or recreational organisation | Improved career | Expectation of employment | Free time |
| Art, music or educational organisation | Improved career | Learn new skills | Self-fulfilment/self-esteem |
| Labour Union | Expectation of employment | Improved career | Non-monetary benefits |
| Political party | Improved career | Friends/family | Self-fulfilment/self-esteem |
| Environmental organisation | Friends/family | Philanthropy | Feeling of belonging |
| Professional association | Learn new skills | Self-fulfilment/self-esteem | Improved career |
| Humanitarian or charitable organisation | Philanthropy | Self-fulfilment/self-esteem | - |
| Community groups | Free time | Friends/family | Improved career |
| Informal civic group/movement | Reciprocity | Self-fulfilment/self-esteem | Free time |

The colour coding of the table shows the differences between organisations in terms of what motivates people to join. Labour unions are clearly more appealing to those with instrumental motivations, who join with expectations of benefits; church or religious organisations are at the other end of the spectrum, attracting mostly people who are motivated by their feelings and wishes to contribute, rather than to benefit; members of political parties report an interesting mix of motivations.

Respondents who were not members of an organisation or a group were asked why they do not join any. The most commonly mentioned reason is lack of time followed by a lack of motivation and interest. Lack of trust does not seem to be a major impediment, though it is mentioned by six percent of the respondents. Similarly, people who did not do any voluntary work for any organisation were asked for their reasons. The top three reasons are the same as in the case of membership. Lack of time was the most widespread reported reason of abstaining from volunteering, followed by a lack of motivation and inability to get involved due to health or old age reasons (see Table 23 and Table 24 in the Appendix for more details).

During focus group discussions a case of a passive community was brought up by a local government representative who described their community residents as “rather inert”: not taking the initiative, neither challenging authorities’ decisions. The municipality of the community despite being rather proactive in informing citizens through new technologies (Facebook, mail lists, phone messaging) had not managed to involve community residents in community council meetings, discussions and decisions. Formal civil society organizations are usually not interested in attending such sessions while non-formal community groups do not exist in the community. Although not typical of the country as a whole, this was an interesting case which provoked the discussion of reasons behind societal apathy and inaction. According to FG participants’ fear of freely expressing their concerns, as well as fear of being perceived as whistle blowers, “traitors”

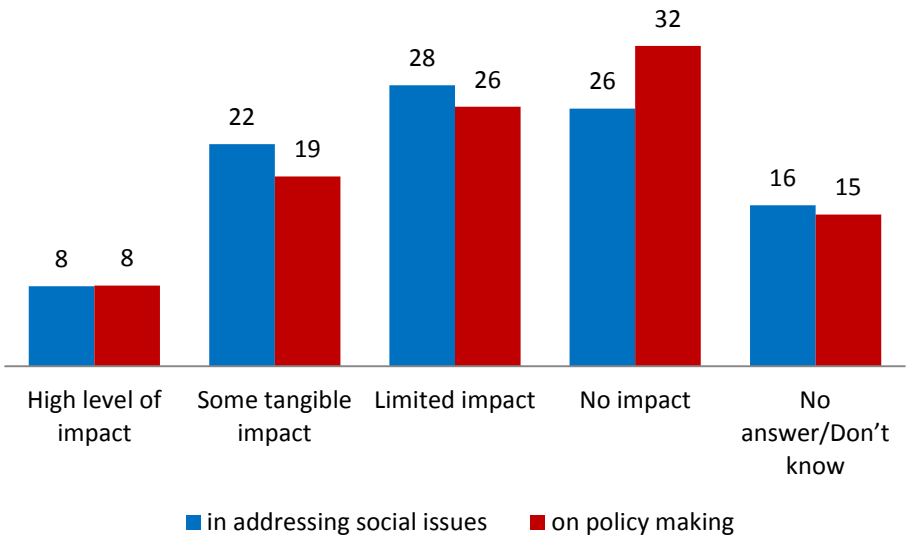
or “defectors” constitute major reasons for indifference towards public life. Poor socio-economic conditions, low level of public spiritedness as well as poor capacity of civil society to mobilize people were among other factors mentioned.

In another focus group discussion participants mentioned that a well-organized activity or social movement has a higher likelihood of attracting more participants, hence good organization is important. In small communities where people know each other and would rather avoid personalized confrontations it is also important to create an inclusive movement which allows its participants and leaders to avoid the burden of assuming the role of the “main hero”.

### *2.4. CSOs and community impact*

Most people in Armenia are sceptical about impact of civil society. The majority (54%) are of the opinion that civil society as a whole has either limited or no impact in addressing social issues in Armenia. People are even more sceptical about civil society’s impact on policy making: 58% think that civil society as a whole has limited or no impact on policy making (see Figure 7 below). For both questions the number of those who gave no answer is quite high 16% and 15% respectively. This is a sign of high ambiguity in people’s understanding of what civil society does or can do.

**Figure 7: In General what kind of impact do you think that civil society as a whole has..? (%)**




According to expert interviews, civil society in Armenia is heavily influenced by the priorities of the international development organizations that fund most of civil society activities. Many CSO continue acting in ‘business-to-business’ format, responding to donor rather than public needs. Moreover the formal nature of CSOs has transformed their attitude towards their activities which they now perceive as ‘work’ rather than ‘dedication.’ At the same time a number of informal, volunteer based, and loosely organized groups emerged in recent years to address environmental concerns, violence in the army, destruction of historical buildings and urban green spaces, transport fee hikes and the like. Some of those groups were successful in championing their specific causes and achieving tangible results, such as saving an open air cinema theatre in

Yerevan from being demolished, protecting a waterfall from a hydropower plant construction, preserving a public park in Yerevan from being turned into a shopping centre, and so on. According to the experts interviewed, the past five years have demonstrated that civil society can succeed if it is consistent in its struggle. Still the successes registered have not resulted in structural changes but rather achieved temporary solutions. On the policy level the impact of civil society sector has been negligible. The potential of the sector has been mostly directed at the elimination of consequences rather than root causes. Activism has rarely resulted in policy change. Interviewed experts had two explanations: in some cases civil society does not have the expertise and the capacity to suggest policy alternatives. In other cases lack of political will of the authorities halts the efforts towards policy change. As a general observation, many CSOs conduct assessments, reveal legislative problems and make sound recommendations but the public at large remains uninformed whether the proposed recommendations were addressed or not.

Focus group discussion participants were somewhat more inclined to see impact of CSOs in a broader sense: in addition to successful cases, mentioned above (the park, the waterfall, etc.) they consider it important that those successes lead to strengthening of civil society overall. With each registered success civil society becomes more self-reliant and demanding. An impact, that is difficult to measure, is the gradual level of local awareness raising and creation of the sense of ownership among the public. In some regions due to CSO work, people are more informed about the responsibilities of local government, participate in LG and community council sessions, and demand accountability from the authorities However, FG participants point to the fact that civil society organisations often lack the capacity for effective oversight of policies they wish to see implemented. Participants from the South of the country mentioned that CSOs set themselves milestones and success markers that are rather modest: awareness, discussions and involvement rather than achievements of set objectives.

### *2.5. Activism and new technologies.*

When asked whether they think civic activism is useful (for their family, friends, colleagues, neighbours, and people in general) 23% gave no answer. The opinion of those who did provide an answer is almost equally split with 51% (39% of total) considering it useful and 49% (38 of the total) considering it not useful or not useful at all (see Table 11).

**Table 11: To what extent civic activism is useful for your family, friends, colleagues, neighbours, just random people?**

| Response option | N | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Very useful | 171 | 11 | 14 | 14 |
| Useful | 448 | 28 | 37 | 51 |
| Not useful | 363 | 23 | 30 | 81 |
| Not useful at all | 233 | 15 | 19 | 100 |
| Total Valid | 1215 | 77 | 100 | |
| No answer/Don’t know | 364 | 23 | | |
| Total | 1579 | 100 | | |

When asked what type of new technology they use to actively participate in society, the largest group of respondents (44%) said that they use none. The second largest group (41%) uses social networks such as Facebook and its Russian counterpart Odnoklassniki (see Table 12).

**Table 12. What type of new technology do you use the most to actively participate in society?**

| | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Don't use | 690 | 44 |
| Social Networks (Facebook, Odnoklassniki, etc.) | 641 | 41 |
| SMS/Mobile messaging | 74 | 5 |
| Other (Skype) | 44 | 2.8 |
| Blog | 42 | 2.7 |
| YouTube | 39 | 2.5 |
| Email | 35 | 2.2 |
| Twitter | 7 | 0.4 |
| Total | 1572 | 99.6 |
| Missing | 7 | 0.4 |
| Total | 1579 | 100 |

Data from a recent organisational survey conducted by the Turpanjuan Center for Policy Analysis at the American University of Armenia (Paturyan and Gevorgyan 2014b) most actively operating CSOs have websites (72%) and Facebook pages (65%). At least a quarter of CSOs also uses other social media, such as Youtube and blogs.

According to the experts interviewed there is a considerable growth in the use of new technologies by civil society groups/organizations in the recent years. They have started to realize the irreplaceable role that new technologies play in public mobilization and campaigning. Still there is a need for training and directing CSOs and civic groups in using these tools more purposefully and effectively. New social media has drawbacks as well: there is a tendency of transferring the real struggle from offline to online platforms. According to the experts interviewed many people, actively campaigning online, do not physically become participants of real campaigns not only due to lack of time but also lack of interest. In this respect CSOs and civic groups should consider strategies of drawing participants from online into the offline field.

Focus group discussion participants noted that the young generation was rather skilled in using new technologies. However they mainly use their skills for personal, rather than public purposes. Typically, representatives of civil society lack the capacity of organizing and administering discussions on online platforms. Facebook, Twitter and Youtube were mentioned as the most popular new technologies that civil society uses to engage people in public life by posting news and publications, organizing discussions and actions as well as mobilizing their beneficiaries. According to some discussion participants new technologies provide great space for interaction, save time, and are the fastest tools of informing and being informed. The use of mobile phones is also rather widespread. A number of successful examples include reporting election violations through mobile messaging and even participating in the decision-making processes through voting for or against certain local government initiatives. Nevertheless traditional means, like phone calls and word of mouth, remain the most popular ways of disseminating information and

mobilizing people. This is especially true when it comes to rural areas since most of the CS beneficiaries do not have access to, or cannot afford using new technologies.

## V. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF CSOs

This section draws mainly upon the results of the adaptation workshop, combining them with some of the survey results and ideas expressed by experts and FG participants. It is useful to distinguish between strengths of civil society at large (including informal groups, spontaneous civic activism and civic attitudes) and strengths of CSOs as one of the elements of civil society.

Strengths of civil society at large:

- High level of civic self-consciousness;
- Sense of ownership and demanding attitude among the youth;
- Active informal groups;
- Ethnic homogeneity, absence of ethnic cleavages;
- Ability to involve the diaspora with its potential;
- Ability to use social media for their purposes.

Strengths of CSOs:

- Professionalism and expertise in the field of CSO management, specific CSO sectors and some other areas, such as, for example, good command of foreign languages;
- High level of managerial development;
- Dedicated personnel;
- Regular and commuted involvement of members and volunteers
- CSOs are mostly politically neutral.

Weaknesses of civil society at large:

- Ethnic homogeneity is also an obstacle for development as it narrows down the development potential;
- Low political activism;
- Inefficient and insufficient use of online sphere;

Weaknesses of CSOs:

- Low levels of engagement in terms of membership and volunteering;
- Low trust towards CSOs due to weak communication, accountability, and overall poor public relations strategies;
- CSOs change/adopt their mission based on donor demands, due to limited resources;
- CSOs do not have strategic plans, do not do needs assessments or impact assessments of implemented projects, and do not construct future strategies based on lessons learned;
- Lack of cooperation between CSOs;
- Lack of gender balance in CSOs;
- Some CSOs are ‘one person show’ which leads to absence of long-term planning;

In addition to the strengths and weaknesses mentioned above, interviewed experts discussed comparative strengths and weaknesses of CSOs vs. informal activist groups. They note that in contrast to institutionalized formal organizations informal groups are not dependent on donor agenda and funding, they are more dynamic in using public awareness tools, are more need-driven and in general more responsive to burning public problems. At the same time they so far lack strategic approaches, long-term coordination and stability that formal organizations have. They also often lack knowledge, experience and financial means for successful large scale campaigns.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

Armenian civil society has undergone several phases of development since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The CSO sector of civil society is consolidated and fairly well developed, possessing the expertise and harnessing loyalty and commitment of its staff, members and volunteers. However CSOs continue to operate in a somewhat unfavourable broader political culture. Levels of trust towards the CSO sector are low and declining. Levels of participation and volunteering are very low. People are sceptical of civil society's ability to solve problems and impact policy. Levels of political activism are also low, but there is a sign of increase in some types of activities, such as signing petitions, participating in peaceful demonstrations and joining boycotts. Political activism might be on increase in Armenia, and civil society should be prepared to take advantage of that.

An important nuance of public attitude towards CSOs is that while general trust towards CSOs or CSOs is on decline, specific types of organisations such as women's organisations, charitable organisations and environmental organisations enjoy high levels of public confidence and have even registered some progress in the recent years. This should give organisations some food for thought in how they position themselves and how they promote their activities and their public image. CSOs should not count on getting credit for simply being part of civil society: that in itself does not carry a positive image in the public's eye. They should strive to show who they are and what they do and gain credibility through their own names and actions, rather than for being a part of a larger anonymous whole.

An entirely new development in Armenian civil society is the rise of civic activism of a novel type: case-focused, largely spontaneous, mostly driven by youth, and powered by social media. There is both cooperation and tensions between the 'old' CSO sector and the 'new' civic activism elements of the Armenian civil society.

New social media is rapidly becoming a part of Armenian daily life and an important tool for civil society to use. It holds potential and CSOs are well aware of that. Social media matters, is used, and should be used more by CSOs to promote their activities. The study highlighted two additional points to this fairly straightforward argument: a) CSOs would benefit from training on how to use social media more efficiently, b) social media is a two-edged sword: while it can boost social society's outreach and capacities, it also holds a risk of diffusing and undermining

real activism by transferring the activities to online world, which is not the world we live and need to act in.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, several recommendations can be proposed.

The promotion of positive image for CSOs has to be as specific as possible: focusing on concrete organisations and their tangible work. As the data in this report shows, abstract 'NGOs' are losing public trust, while more specific types of associations (such as women's associations or environmental associations) are able to gradually gain more public confidence. CSOs need to build their images in non-abstract ways, through symbols that common people can relate to.

CSOs and international organisations should explore the potential of hotlines. The survey shows that calling a hotline is a type of activity many people say they would be willing to do, unlike more 'traditional' ways of civic participation like petitions, demonstrations and boycotts.

CSOs expressed both need and interest in learning more about efficient use of social media for promotion and mobilisation. This request can easily be addressed by international development organisations, and by CSOs themselves through experience sharing and self-learning.

A series of discussions, brainstorming, experience sharing, and similar activities should be organised to explore how formal CSOs can effectively cooperate with informal activist groups to combine strengths and compensate for each other's weaknesses.

More research is needed on the impact of social media on online and offline activism. Gathering of systematic evidence through case studies is something that CSOs themselves could undertake with some guidance from scholarly community. How is social media used for social activism? To what extent and under what circumstances online calls for action translate into real actions? What kind of strategies are efficient? Answering these questions empirically based on accumulated systematic experience can help CSOs strengthen their outreach strategies. At the same time, CSOs themselves are perfectly positioned to serve as laboratories for collecting necessary data to answer those questions.

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# VIII.APPENDIX

**Table 13: Interviews completed per region**

| Marz | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Yerevan | 569 | 36 |
| Aragatsotn | 72 | 7 |
| Ararat | 144 | 9 |
| Armavir | 159 | 10 |
| Gegharkunik | 126 | 8 |
| Lori | 106 | 7 |
| Kotayk | 125 | 8 |
| Shirak | 110 | 7 |
| Syunik | 70 | 4 |
| Vayots Dzor | 35 | 2 |
| Tavush | 63 | 4 |
| Total | 1579 | 100 |

**Table 14: Size of the settlements where survey was conducted**

| Settlement population size | N | % | Cumulative % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Under 2,000 inhabitants | 280 | 18 | 18 |
| 2,001 - 5,000 inhabitants | 210 | 13 | 31 |
| 5,001 - 10,000 inhabitants | 138 | 8 | 40 |
| 10,001 - 20,000 inhabitants | 105 | 7 | 46 |
| 20,001 - 50,000 inhabitants | 160 | 10 | 57 |
| 50,001 - 100,000 inhabitants | 16 | 1 | 58 |
| 100,001 - 500,000 inhabitants | 101 | 6 | 64 |
| 500,001 or more inhabitants | 569 | 36 | 100 |
| Total | 1579 | 100 | |

**Table 15: Personal monetary income last month**

| Income category | N | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| More than 500,001 AMD (more than $1,200) | 6 | 0.4 | 0.5 | 0.5 |
| 350,001 – 500,000 AMD ($860-$1,200) | 12 | 1 | 1 | 1.5 |
| 200,001 – 350,000 AMD ($490-$860) | 36 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 100,001 – 200,000 AMD ($120-$490) | 122 | 8 | 9 | 13 |
| 50,001 – 100,000 AMD ($120-$250 | 268 | 17 | 20 | 34 |
| 20,001 – 50,000 AMD ($50-$120) | 329 | 21 | 25 | 58 |
| Up to 20,000 AMD (up to $50) | 152 | 10 | 11 | 70 |
| 0 | 401 | 25 | 30 | 100 |
| Total Valid | 1326 | 84 | 100 | |
| Refuse to answer | 206 | 13 | | |
| No answer/Don't know | 47 | 3 | | |
| Total | 1579 | 100 | | |

**Table 16: Educational level**

| Type of education | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Primary school (4 years) | 6 | 0.4 |
| Incomplete secondary school | 57 | 7 |
| Secondary school | 580 | 37 |
| college, technical school | 505 | 32 |
| Completed university degree (4 or 5 years) | 357 | 23 |
| Advanced graduate university degree | 74 | 5 |
| Total | 1579 | 100 |

**Table 17: Age groups**

| Age group | N | % | Cumulative % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 17-30 | 298 | 19 | 19 |
| 31-40 | 306 | 19 | 38 |
| 41-50 | 327 | 21 | 59 |
| 51-60 | 353 | 22 | 82 |
| 61 and above | 287 | 18 | 100 |
| Total | 1571 | 100 | |

**Table 18: To what extent are you satisfied with your participation in CSO/communities activities?**

| Response option | N | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Very satisfied | 42 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Satisfied | 211 | 13 | 15 | 18 |
| Unsatisfied | 107 | 9 | 8 | 26 |
| Very unsatisfied | 62 | 6 | 4 | 30 |
| Have not participated | 975 | 62 | 70 | 100 |
| Total Valid | 1397 | 89 | 100 | |
| No answer/Don't know | 182 | 11 | | |
| Total | 1579 | 100 | | |

**Table 19: Number of organisations a person is a member of**

| No of organisations | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1185 | 75 |
| 1 | 300 | 19 |
| 2 | 53 | 3.4 |
| 3 | 19 | 1.2 |
| 4 | 11 | 0.7 |
| 5 | 5 | 0.3 |
| 6 | 3 | 0.2 |
| 7 | 2 | 0.1 |
| 8 | 1 | 0.1 |
| Total | 1579 | 100 |

**Table 20: Doing unpaid voluntary work for organisations summed up**

| Number of organisations respondent does voluntary work for | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1361 | 86 |
| 1 | 160 | 10 |
| 2 | 21 | 1.3 |
| 3 | 16 | 1.0 |
| 4 | 12 | 0.8 |
| 5 | 4 | 0.3 |
| 6 | 2 | 0.1 |
| 7 | 2 | 0.1 |
| 8 | 1 | 0.1 |
| Total | 1579 | 100 |

**Table 21: Hours of volunteering**

| Hours per month spent on organisational activities | N | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Up to 3 | 64 | 34 | 34 |
| 4-10 | 57 | 30.3 | 64.4 |
| 11-20 | 32 | 17 | 81.4 |
| 21-60 | 20 | 10.6 | 92 |
| 61 and more | 15 | 8 | 100.0 |
| Total | 190 | 100 | |

**Table 22: Frequency of donating to organisations**

| Frequency of donating money or goods to CSOs | N | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 86 | 38 | 38 |
| 2 to 3 | 98 | 43 | 81 |
| 4 to 10 | 34 | 15 | 96 |
| 11 and more (100 maximum) | 10 | 4 | 100 |
| Total | 228 | 100 | |

**Table 23: Reasons for not joining organisations/groups**

| Reason | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Too busy/No time | 535 | 45 |
| Do not want/not interested | 254 | 21 |
| Health problems/too old | 128 | 11 |
| Do not trust | 74 | 6 |
| There are no such organizations/groups in the community | 57 | 5 |
| Not informed | 29 | 2.4 |
| Has not been offered | 20 | 1.7 |
| Not profitable | 8 | 0.7 |
| Never thought of that | 5 | 0.4 |
| I am not an active person | 1 | 0.1 |
| No answer/don't know | 74 | 6.2 |
| Total | 1185 | 100 |

**Table 24: Reasons for not volunteering for an organisation/group**

| Reason | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Too busy/No time | 596 | 44 |
| Do not want to/not interested/see no sense | 222 | 16 |
| Health problems/too old | 117 | 9 |
| Cannot afford | 80 | 6 |
| Has not been offered/no opportunity | 80 | 6 |
| No such organizations/groups in the community | 32 | 2.3 |
| Have problems/need help myself | 29 | 2.1 |
| Do not trust | 12 | 0.9 |
| I have a paid job | 11 | 0.8 |
| Not informed | 10 | 0.7 |
| I am not an active person | 4 | 0.3 |
| No one does that for me | 2 | 0.1 |
| Was not present in the community | 2 | 0.1 |
| My house is far away | 1 | 0.1 |
| I don't want to do anything for this country | 1 | 0.1 |
| Low level of activism in our society | 1 | 0.1 |
| No answer/don't know | 162 | 12 |
| Total | 1362 | 100 |