

## **International Foundation for Election Systems**

### **Survey of Election Officials in Armenia — 1998**

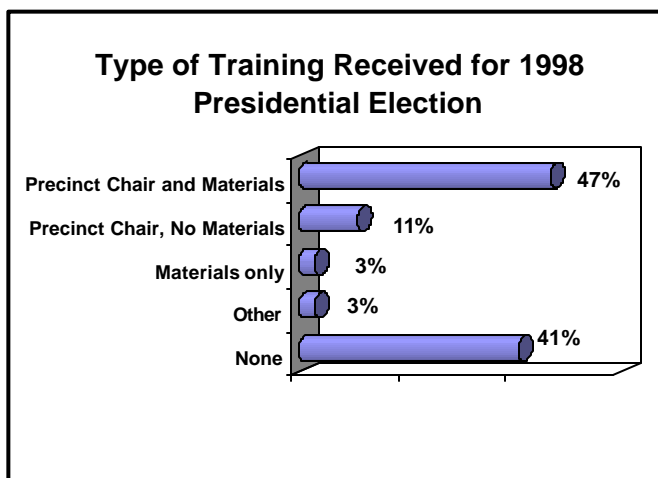
The International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) implemented this survey of election officials in Armenia in order to learn more about their attitudes and outlooks toward the electoral system now in place in Armenia. The fieldwork for the survey took place between Oct. 28 and Nov. 5, 1998. A total of 120 respondents were chosen at random from eight regions (Marzes). 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). This survey was made possible through funding provided by the United States Agency for International Development.

#### **Experience and Training of Election Officials**

The election officials interviewed are fairly experienced as a group: fifty-nine percent have worked in three or more national elections since 1995. Generally, respondents from Yerevan and other urban centers are more likely to have worked in fewer elections than respondents from rural areas. The following list outlines the percentage of election officials who worked during recent elections.

1998 Parliamentary By-Election	30%
1998 Presidential Election	91%
1996 Presidential Election	71%
1995 Prliamentary Election	62%
Village or community-level elec.	20%

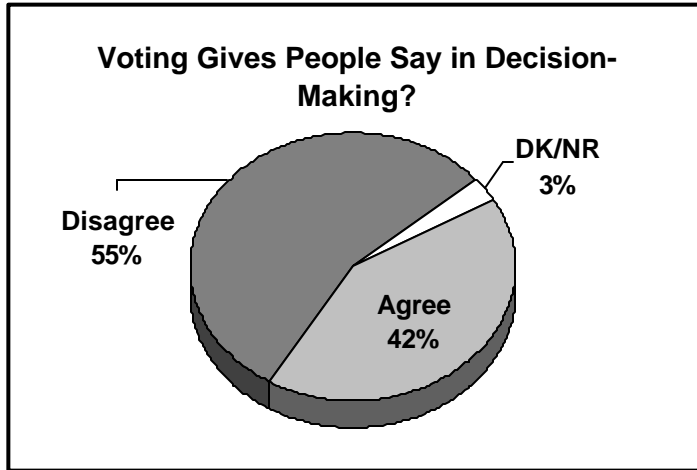
This survey also found that election officials from Yerevan and, to a lesser extent, other urban areas are more likely to be politically active than officials from rural areas. When asked for the political party which best represents the interests of the people, only 48% of election officials chose a political party while 41% replied "None."



Election officials also seem to have been exposed to differing levels of training in preparing for their jobs. When asked about the training they received for the March 1998 Presidential elections, 47% replied that they received training from the Precinct Chair with the aid of materials, whereas 11% did not receive any materials to aid in training. Three percent either received training with materials only or some other type of training, but forty-one percent of the respondents did not receive any training at all.

For those who received training, 48% report that the training lasted two or more days. Training sessions included a discussion of the electoral law (50%), the process of elections (40%), and the rules and regulations governing the conduct of commission members (13%).

**Attitudes Toward and Knowledge of Electoral System**



Fifty-five percent of election officials disagree with the statement that "voting gives ordinary people a chance to influence decision-making in our country," whereas only forty-two percent agree with it. This seems to betray a lack of confidence in the election process as an empowerment tool for ordinary citizens in the country. When asked what "free and fair elections" mean to them, most respondents (70%) said "fair expression of the voters' will." When asked which

countries actually had free and fair elections, the country mentioned most frequently was the United States (18%), followed by Germany (12%), France (10%), and England (7%). Less than one percent mentioned Armenia but the most frequent response was that free and fair elections do not exist in any country (29%).

As far as knowledge of electoral developments is concerned, this survey found that most respondents were unaware of recent events. Sixty percent of the electoral officials interviewed had not heard of the Universal Election Code (UEC) draft being debated in the National Assembly at the time the survey took place, although various drafts had been discussed publicly for one and one-half years..

**Democracy and Economic Conditions**

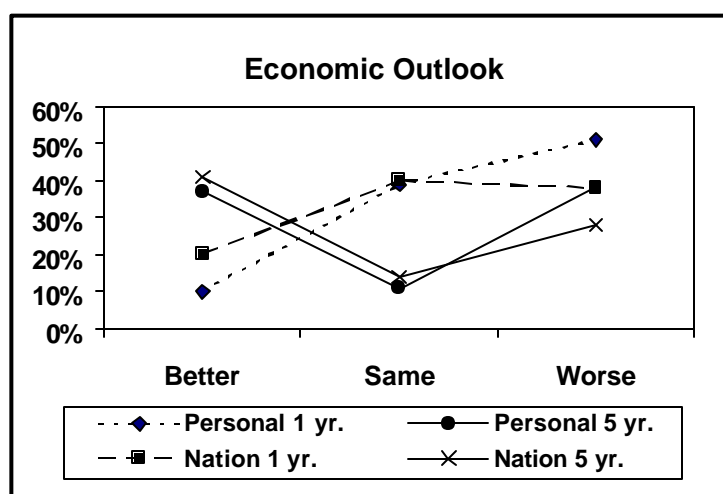
A plurality of respondents (46%) think that Armenia is a democracy while forty-two percent do not think that it is a democracy. In a follow-up question, respondents were asked what democracy means to them. The responses are outlined below:

<b>Meaning of Democracy</b>	
Protection of citizen's rights & freedom	30%
Government takes into account people's opinion	12%
Freedom of word, press, and will	20%
Government provides social security/high social welfare	11%
Law should be for everyone	3%
Government provides equal financial conditions for everyone	3%
Law should be more democratic	4%
People should participate in law	4%
Other	21%

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Like most Armenians, election officials are undergoing economic hardships and are generally pessimistic about the future. Asked about their personal financial situation a year from now, thirty-one percent thought it was going to get worse, thirty-nine percent thought it was going to stay the same, and only ten percent thought it would get better. There is more optimism for their personal financial situation in the longer term. When asked about the personal financial situation 5 years from now, thirty-seven percent thought it would be worse, eleven percent thought it would be the same, and thirty-eight percent thought it would get better. As for the national economic situation, there is similar pessimism for the immediate year (38% worse, 40% same, 20% better), and greater optimism for the long run (28% worse, 14% same, 41% better).



There is also a high degree of dissatisfaction with most aspects of society affected by government policies. The table below details the degree of satisfaction/dissatisfaction:

	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Economic Reforms	16%	81%
Social Welfare System	8%	89%
Level of Political Freedom	65%	33%
Protection of Rights & Freedoms	33%	65%
Fight against Crime	46%	51%
Quality of Health System	23%	75%
Electoral System	52%	45%

IFES also found that election officials are not very politically involved. This statement is especially true for respondents from rural areas rather than for urban areas, especially Yerevan. When asked to name their political party preference, over fifty-two percent of rural respondents replied "None." This figure was twenty-eight percent for respondents from Yerevan and thirty-five percent for urban respondents as a whole. The overall national percentage of respondents replying "None" was forty-one percent. Among the respondents who did list specific parties, the most popular was the Communist Party (12%), followed by

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Dashnak (9%), the National Democratic Union (8%), the Armenian National Movement , and the Republican Party (both with 6%).

### **Perceptions of Electoral Process**

Most (90%) election officials report that recent elections went well in their precincts. Sixty-five percent state that the voters understood the process "well" or "very well," and eighty-two percent believe that their fellow electoral officials were "well" or "very well" trained. Among the main reasons given for providing assistance to voters was because voters could not read (40%), or did not understand the voting process (40%).

As far as the biggest problems during the elections, the most frequently cited problem by election officials is that voters did not understand the election procedures (37%). The other major problems mentioned are listed below.

Voters did not understand procedures	37%
Precinct not well equipped with supplies	10%
Problem with security of voting process	9%
Difficult to control voters	8%
Election manuals not clear to election officials	7%
Not enough voting booths	6%
Other	13%
No problems	29%

This survey found that most election officials do not use the Election Law and Election Manual with regularity. Ninety-eight percent of the election officials report having a copy of the Election Law but only thirty percent report using it "Very often" or "Several times." Forty-one percent of the respondents felt that they had memorized the election law and did not need to use it anymore, while another five percent reported that they never used the Election Law. Officials reported similar usage of the official Election Manual (86% have a copy). Only thirty-two percent report using it often or several times, while twenty-one percent have never used it and thirty-one percent have used it once or twice.