

KAZAKHSTAN 1995
The Public Speaks
An Analysis of
National Public Opinion

Elchie Natalie Skoczylas
Steven Wagner
Barbara Frass Varon



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INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ELECTION SYSTEMS
1101 15th Street, NW • Third Floor • Washington, DC 20005
TEL (202) 828-8507 • FAX (202) 452-0804

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Introduction

This paper examines the role of the public in contemporary society and analyzes public opinion in Kazakhstan. This analysis of Kazakhstan's opinion environment can provide insights into the changes currently taking place in the country and yield indicators on the extent of public engagement in the transformation process of an emerging independent state.

Findings are based on a public opinion survey the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) commissioned in Kazakhstan. Personal interviews were conducted between July 9 and 29, 1995. This was the first such survey undertaken by IFES and is part of the voter education program currently underway in Kazakhstan.

The nationwide survey was designed in consultations with U.S. electoral specialists and American and Kazakhstani professionals. It measured public opinion about political and economic developments, the performance of the government, civic and political organizations, and participatory democracy. The last was probed in detail, exploring the public's understanding of and attitudes towards elections and candidates. The design of the sample (multi-stage, stratified probability) ensured that respondents represented the adult national population of Kazakhstan. The data, therefore, accurately represent the feelings and opinions of the population of Kazakhstan as a whole.¹

Ms. Skoczylas, political scientist specializing in public opinion research, has over twenty years experience in the conduct and analysis of opinion polls in the developed and developing world. Currently she is a social science research analyst with the USIA Office of Research and Media Reaction focusing on public opinion in Ukraine. Opinions in this paper are solely hers and nothing can be attributed to USIA.

Mr. Steven Wagner, vice-president of Luntz Research Company and lecturer on party organization, has over twenty years experience in political party work and over fifteen years in survey research, working in the U.S. as well as Western Europe, Latin America and the former Soviet Union.

Ms. Varon, editor/translator and political activist, has over 15 years experience in the U.S. electoral system and in political campaigns. She designed an outreach program for voter registration in Fairfax County (Virginia) and has worked on political campaigns, designing strategies and campaign literature for candidates on the state and local level.

¹ Fieldwork was managed by the Giller Institute, a sociological research firm in Almaty. Interviews were conducted between July 9 and 29, 1995, with a sample of 1500 adults (18 years and older). Young adults, aged 18 and 24 living in urban centers were over-sampled in order to analyze in detail the opinions and attitudes of this group representing the pool of the future leaders of Kazakhstan.

Executive Summary

Key findings from an IFES-commissioned nationwide survey fielded in Kazakhstan July 9-29, 1995:

- **Pessimism widespread about conditions:** Three-fourths are dissatisfied with the situation in Kazakhstan today, mostly for economic reasons, such as the worsening financial situation, inflation, delay in the payment of wages. Two-thirds state that conditions have deteriorated since independence. While not expecting economic improvements in the next year, a majority are hopeful that conditions will have improved by the year 2000.
- **No consensus on the declaration of independence or future economic system:** Opinion divides on whether the independence of Kazakhstan as contributed to the well-being of the country. Among Kazakhs the prevailing opinion is that the declaration was a “good thing,” but Russians are more likely to see it as “a bad thing.” Opinion also divides on what direction the economy should take; nationwide, a half would return to an economy fully controlled by the state, and a third prefer to limit government involvement.
- **Most foresee continued stability in inter-ethnic relations:** The public is quite confident that relations among national groups will remain stable for a long time. This prediction is widely shared by definite majorities of Kazakhs and Russians.
- **No consensus on curtailing freedoms:** Opinion is divided as to whether it is necessary to limit political and civil rights to have order and discipline. Although a half of the public reject the proposition that a dictatorship is necessary to maintain order and discipline, a sizeable proportion accept this proposition.
- **Public feels insufficiently informed about developments:** Sizeable proportions in all age and educational groups are concerned that information is not readily available about political developments and economic reforms.
- **Western countries are seen as models:** Only a few say that no country is a model for Kazakhstan. Among the countries named, most frequently are Germany, other European countries, the United States, Japan, Turkey, and Russia.
- **Democracy equated with freedoms:** When asked “what it means to live in a democracy,” most define it as a society which observes human rights and permits personal freedoms and the freedom of choice. Kazakhs also define it as living in an independent state.
- **Lukewarm support for civic organizations:** Attitudes toward non-governmental organizations are mixed. Around half agree that the environment in Kazakhstan is conducive to the formation of citizen’s associations without government involvement, but a fourth reject this view and as many express no opinion. However, a half believe that it is necessary to have citizens freely associate

and form organizations without the involvement of the government.

- **Political parties have very limited appeal:** A slim majority favor a multi-party system. However, one-third prefer a single party or “no party at all.” None of the political parties fare well in terms of public support. Identification with any one political party is in single digits (9% or less), with the exception of the Movement Nevada-Semipalatinsk — among Kazakhs, 13% identify with this party. This low level of identification with parties probably reflects a negative, maybe hostile, view of political parties. A definite majority prefer to vote for an independent candidate and only one-in-five would vote for a party-affiliated candidate. Moreover, large majorities believe that labor unions, community organizations and political parties should have the right to nominate candidates for the Supreme Soviet.
- **Most vote, but few feel empowered:** Although there is broad participation in elections, there is no sense of empowerment. Voting is seen mainly as a duty of a citizen, not a privilege or a process whereby citizens can affect decision-making and have a voice in the country’s course of development. Opinion about voting differs along national lines — half of Kazakhs see voting as empowerment, half of Russians reject this notion.
- **Casting votes for others widely practiced.** Many voters either witnessed one person voting for family and friends or themselves engaged in this practice (14%).
- **Most say that election officials are the same as before independence:** Three-fourths agree that elections are managed by the same people who ran things before independence; only a few say elections are run by new people.

Compared with the general public, young adults (urbanites aged 18-24) are:

- **More optimistic** about conditions since independence — only a third say the situation has worsened, a view expressed by 67% of the general public.
- **More dissatisfied** with the observance of human rights and political freedoms.
- **Less willing** to trade personal freedoms for order, most rejecting the notion that order requires limiting political and civil rights or establishing a dictatorship.
- **Opposed** to reestablishing a state-controlled economy, albeit by a small margin.
- **Supportive** of non-governmental organizations, with two-thirds saying such are necessary.
- **Endorse** a multi-party system — 70% see many parties constituting an ideal (54% of the general public hold this view).
- **More extensively identify** with a political party, with four parties recording a following in two digits

— the Movement Nevada-Semipalatinsk (identified by 23% of young Kazakhs and 14% of young Russians), the Democratic Committee on Human Rights and the Party of Peoples Unity of Kazakhstan (each attracting around 10% of Kazaks and Russians), and Zheltoksan (attracting about 10% of Kazakhs).

- C **Do not accept** voting as empowerment — by more than a two-to-one margin, young Russians reject the proposition that voting gives the public influence on decisions, while opinion divides among young Kazakhs.
- C **More frequently witness** multiple votes cast by one person (59% saw others casting many votes and 30% themselves participated in such a practice (30%).

State-Building and a Civil Society

The challenge of emerging democracies, including Kazakhstan, is to build a state that offers political stability and economic security, that is responsive to societal needs and concerns, and that respects human rights. The tasks, then, is to build institutions for accountable governance, to develop a viable economic system, and to create a climate conducive to voluntary associations. Such a state enables the development of a civil society based on democratic principles and dependent on public participation in a country's decision-making process.

State-building and the development of a civil society are mutually dependent and have to proceed in tandem. The structure of the state – its political, legal and economic systems – is the backdrop against which a civil society can flourish. The executive, legislative, and judicial branches represent the governing bodies; the basic laws ensure political stability, personal freedoms, equitable adjudication of disputes, and checks on government power. The economic structure provides for orderly transactions, delineates economic activities, and encourages the production of wealth. The political and economic systems interface and in the process meet basic human needs and seek to balance the interests of society and the rights of individuals.

The public benefits from such a political and economic system and can exert pressures to influence decisions. If there are vehicles to express the interests and concerns of the public – such as fair and honest elections; effective community, professional and political organizations; and independent media – the public can act as a check on the possible abuses of power.

The development of a just society, political stability and economic well-being requires balancing of power. Historically it has been shown that political and economic freedoms are interlinked. If political power is concentrated in a few hands, those holding it tend to interfere with economic freedoms; conversely, if economic power is similarly concentrated, those holding it might “buy out” political institutions.

The public, therefore, is a key factor in state building. Through a myriad of voluntary institutions and associations it participates in the political and economic life of a country and invests in its future. It is vital, therefore, that in a democracy individuals have opportunities to organize around common interests, concerns, needs, principles, and preferences. That typically means building community organizations, non-governmental agencies, and political parties. These civic institutions monitor policy and check the concentration of power, and thus support the preservation of the underlying democratic principles.

Public Opinion – a Force in the 1990s

In the current political environment, public opinion has become a major force for change. No democratically elected politician would develop a strategy or articulate a program without examining public sentiments. Although public opinion does not develop policies or determine a course of action, it does set parameters within which politicians and leaders may function successfully. In all countries, politicians habitually refer to public opinion to argue policies and programs. To ensure receptivity to new initiatives, policies and programs are presented as being responsive to the needs and expectations of the public. Moreover, when reporting on developments in the mass media, statesmen as well as journalists very frequently couch their arguments in terms of public support or address the perceived reasons for public opposition.

The focus on the role of public opinion in a country does not diminish or deny the importance and relevance of other factors – actions of statesmen and political leaders, economic developments, and relations with other countries. Regardless of the importance of these other factors, public support of the government is essential for political stability. Alienation between the public and the government introduces the risk of destabilization or the destruction of institutions. It is essential, therefore, for leaders on both the national and local levels to know and understand public opinion – the concerns, attitudes, and expectations of the public.

In the governing of modern societies, there are three social science methods used extensively to assist in developing policies and programs and designing strategies to implement decisions. These three methods are:

- C public opinion polls,
- C focus group discussions, and
- C in-depth interviews.

The latter two allow the probing of issues and concerns and detailed examination of perceptions and expectations. Focus group discussions are also effectively used to test new messages and explore receptiveness to new initiatives. Public opinion polls measure the prevailing public sentiments with relative accuracy and reliability. Thus, data from public opinion surveys provide invaluable information. Specifically they:

- C describe the opinion environment,
- C measure views on political and economic issues, and
- C assist in developing hierarchies of what matters to the public.

In addition, public opinion findings provide guidelines as to the most effective ways to address the public and what communications channels to use: the printed or the electronic media? mass or specialized? or rely on personal disseminators?

Opinion polls, as well as focus group discussions, are effective methods to measure if information is reaching the public and to gauge the resulting changes in attitudes and opinions. Opinion polls conducted in different time periods (fielding the same questions repeatedly and using a comparable sample approach) can indicate public receptivity to a message, establish trends, and document stability or change in public opinions and attitudes.

The utility of poll results depends on the ability of analysts to interpret the data and provide an accurate picture

of public thinking. Statistical analyses of survey data permit one to draw empirically based conclusions about public attitudes and opinions and to explore the collected information extensively. Correlational analysis, for example, examines the interaction between opinions, demographic attributes, and attitudinal measures. Data analysis also can yield insightful information about:

- the extent of support and opposition,
- the public's understand concepts and terms,
- the hierarchy of concerns and interests,
- the differences in opinions among population subgroups, and
- the commonality of values – what opinions and attitudes sub-groups share.

For purposes of this presentation, the analysis focuses on key demographic variables.

Public Opinion Environment in Kazakhstan

This first IFES-commissioned survey in Kazakhstan provides a comprehensive picture of the public opinion environment in Kazakhstan. As previously mentioned, the survey was designed in consultation between American and Kazakhstani specialists in survey research and in the electoral system. The Giller Institute, a research organization in Kazakhstan, was responsible for all aspects of fieldwork: preparing the field instrument, training interviewers, selecting respondents, and supervising interviews.

This survey is part of the IFES voting education program. IFES first arrived in March 1994 to conduct a pre-election technical assessment and election observation of the Kazakhstani parliamentary elections, while creating a report detailing recommendations for electoral law reform in areas such as ballot security, voter registration, and the issue of family voting. In November 1994, IFES opened a full-time Central Asia regional office in Almaty which serves as a base of operations for all IFES activities in the region. In conjunction with the opening of a permanent office, IFES also opened the Democracy and Education Training Center, which serves as a resource center for interested groups or individuals studying democracy building and free and fair electoral procedures.

Following the March, 1995 dissolution of Parliament, IFES sought to assert itself as playing the role of an intermediary, or “bridge” between the government and NGO community. To that end, IFES commissioned a baseline national survey of the Kazakhstani electorate which would be conducted in July, 1995 and would measure democracy indicators and could be followed up with periodic tracking polls. Among the most important questions put forth in the survey were opinions of the electoral system and attitudes towards civil society activities and NGO participation. Included as part of the survey was an over-sampling of urban youth aged 18-24, which in conjunction with the nationally-representative sample will provide information on which segments of society will potentially be most receptive to civil society participation. Results of the survey were also used in two Fall 1995 seminar programs undertaken in Almaty which featured representatives from the full spectrum of the Kazakhstani domestic NGO community. The topic of the first seminar dealt with parliamentary districting/reapportionment and voting rights issues, while the second focused on creating effective voter information and motivation initiatives. After completion of the seminars, work has continued on supporting civil society in Kazakhstan and working to bring cooperation and understanding between the Kazakhstani government and the domestic NGO community.

Between July 9 and 29, 1995, personal interviews were conducted in Kazakhstan with a sample of 1500 adults (18 years and older), which includes an oversample of 341 young urban residents (18-24). This sample is fully representative of the national adult (18 years and older) population. Interviewing took place in all regions, in cities of various sizes as well as in rural areas. The sample design was multi-stage, stratified, applying random probability at all but the last stratum – the selection of respondents – at which a quota selection was used.

The IFES-commissioned survey in Kazakhstan was designed to examine public attitudes and opinions on key political and economic issues and to gauge how the public views the changes taking place in Kazakhstan. In particular, the survey explored public interest in and attitudes towards participatory democracy – interest in politics and government, support for non-governmental associations and political parties, and opinion on

elections and candidates. The design of the survey, specifically the sampling approach, ensured that the results are projectionable to the population nationwide, that findings reflect the views and opinions of all adults. The sample design also called for over-sampling young adults (sample of 400), between 18 and 24 years of age, thus allowing for detailed analysis of the views and opinions of the segment of the population from which the country's future leaders will emerge.

The questionnaire addressed political and economic issues, seeking to measure public opinion on:

- C the overall situation in Kazakhstan and the declaration of independence economic developments – assessment of current conditions and expectations about the future, the extent of support for and the preferred pace of economic reforms,
- C democracy – what it means and what are its main attributes,
- C efficacy and performance of national institutions and government officials, and
- C the availability of information on political and economic issues.

The survey also probed attitudes towards participatory democracy:

- C the formation of associations and civic organizations,
- C extent of identification with political parties,
- C elections and voting, that is, awareness of and views about election laws and practices, from nomination of candidates to the performance of the Central Electoral Commission.

The data were analyzed to examine the main concerns of the public, their expectations about the future, and to determine what attitudes and values the public shares and where the differences lie.² In reporting findings, the terms “general public” or “total population” and the description “nationwide” are used interchangeably and will refer to the adult population of Kazakhstan, residents of the country who are 18 years and older. The term “young adults,” for the sake of brevity, refers to the views and opinions of adults between 18 and 24 who reside in the major urban centers of the country.

The two foci of the analysis are (1) to identify the prevailing opinions and the similarities and differences in opinions of Kazakhstan's two main national subgroups – Kazakhs and Russians – and (2) to compare opinions of the population in general with the views of young adults living in the country's major urban centers. These young adults are particularly relevant when examining the process of state-building in Kazakhstan and the emergence of a civil society. They represent the successor generation, the pool from which, in all likelihood, the future leaders of Kazakhstan will emerge. The opinions of Kazakhstan's two major national groups are equally important and the relationship between these two groups may well define the future of Kazakhstan. With a total population of about 17 million, roughly 42% are Kazakhs and 38% are Russians, the sentiments of national identification are potentially volatile and can fuel political activity.

² The margin of error for the nationwide survey with a sample of 1500 is plus or minus 3 percentage points. That is, nineteen times out of twenty, results from a sample of this size will differ by no more than 3 percentage points in either direction from what would be found if it were possible to interview every adult in the country. In addition to sampling error, the practical difficulties of conducting a survey of public opinion may introduce other sources of error into the results. The margin of error is larger for population subgroups.

Political Issues

General Mood

The mood of the public in Kazakhstan is quite pessimistic. Nationwide, over three-fourths (78%) are dissatisfied with the situation in the country (45% are *somewhat* and 31% *very dissatisfied*). This negative assessment is evident across all demographic groups and along nationality lines. The young urbanites (those between 18 and 24 years of age) are as dissatisfied as the general public (among those 18-24, the level of dissatisfaction is 55% *somewhat* and 26% *very dissatisfied*).

Economic issues predominate as the reason for the widespread public dissatisfaction with conditions in the country (Table 1). Individuals from all walks of life give roughly comparable reasons for their dissatisfaction. Generally, reasons given by young adults parallel those expressed by the general public, except as noted below:

- C The two most frequently named economic reasons by the general public and young adults are the worsening of the financial situation and inflation, and the ever increasing prices for goods and products.
- C The general public are likely to mention delays in the payment of wages, an issue of much less salience to young adults, who are more prone to mention the state of the national economy.

The small proportion who are satisfied (21% of the general public and 18% of young adults) generally mention political stability and the absence of ethnic strife (9%) to explain their views. A few comment that their satisfaction stems from the declaration of Kazakhstan's sovereignty (2%) or the development of a market economy (2%).

Not only is the public dissatisfied with the overall conditions in the country, but life is seen as having deteriorated since independence. Nationwide, two-thirds (67%) say that life has "gotten worse," a sense of decline expressed by varying majorities among all demographic groups except the young Kazakh urbanites who are much more optimistic about developments since independence. Only a third of this young group see conditions worsening since independence; the rest (63%) say that conditions have remained the same or have improved.

Opinions among other population subgroups are largely negative and a pessimistic outlook is much more widespread among the Russians than the Kazakhs. One half of the Kazakh general public, but a large majority of the Russian population of all age groups say that conditions have worsened.

Additionally, persons in the high socio-economic level tend to be less pessimistic about conditions since independence than those in the lower levels. As would be expected, a negative view is particularly widespread among pensioners and individuals in all demographic sub-groups who:

- C profess the Orthodox faith
- C see the independence of Kazakhstan as a "bad thing"
- C deny that Kazakhstan is a democracy
- C disapprove of Nazarbayev

Table 1. Principal Reasons for Dissatisfaction

“Please tell me some of the reasons why you said you are dissatisfied with the situation in Kazakhstan today?”

Most frequently volunteered reason for dissatisfaction (in %)	Total Adult Population	Young Adults
(Sample size)	(1500)	(341)
Economic conditions		
Worsening financial situation	32	26
Inflation	24	18
Delay in payment of wages	26	9
State of economy	17	26
Unemployment	16	12
Harsh existence	13	5
Other economic reasons	2	2
Cuts in social benefits	9	13
Crime, illegal activities	7	10
Uncertainty about future	4	8
Other	10	21
Don't Know/No response	*	*
Not Asked	24	27
Total**	184%	177%

* Less than .05% ** Multiple responses account for the high total.

To gauge the level of public concern about the situation in Kazakhstan in more detail, the survey measured how the public assesses political, economic, and social conditions. Vast majorities (ranging from 74% to over 80%) are dissatisfied with “the standard of living in the country” and the meeting of basic needs: “the provisions of the social welfare system” and the delivery of “health care.” Dissatisfaction is equally widespread about the lack of law and order, specifically the failure to “fight against crime,” and implementation of “economic reforms.” (For a more detailed discussion on economic issues, see pages 17 and 18). A smaller, but still sizeable majority (two-thirds) are dissatisfied with the state of “education, science and culture.” (Table 2)

The public is less critical about the political environment, specifically about the protection of individual freedoms and rights. Compared with economic conditions, far fewer express dissatisfaction with the protection of personal freedoms, and sizeable proportions – around a third – are at least “somewhat satisfied.”

- Although a definite majority (58%) are dissatisfied about “the protection of human rights in the country,” one-in-three is satisfied (32%).
- One-half is dissatisfied with “the level of political and civil freedoms,” but a third is satisfied with it (48% to 36%). (See Table 2)

On the issue of Kazakhstan’s electoral system there is no consensus and opinion is almost evenly split. As many are dissatisfied (42%) as are dissatisfied (40%) with the electoral system currently in place (for a more detailed discussion on the electoral system see pages 35-43). Young adults share the perceptions of the general public, except for the slightly higher level of dissatisfaction on questions of human rights and political and civil freedoms. This difference, however, is probably more attributable to the status of the young adults group (i.e., urban and educated) rather than to their age. (See Table 2)

Table 2. Level of Dissatisfaction with Conditions in Country

“Please tell me whether you are completely satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or completely dissatisfied with each of the following – ...”

Percent dissatisfied with conditions in country:	Total Adult Population	Total by Nationality		Young Adults	
		Kazakh	Russian	Kazakh	Russian
(Sample size)	(1500)	(598)	(641)	(83)	(197)
Living standard	88	81	94	87	94
Social welfare	86	81	91	84	95
Health care	84	75	90	79	92
Anti-crime measures	75	60	84	69	82
Pace of economic reforms	72	59	81	75	82
Education, science, culture	64	57	70	60	71
Protection of human rights	55	39	63	55	80
Political and civil freedoms	45	34	52	45	63
Electoral system	41	36	44	39	51

Overall, Russians tend to be much more dissatisfied than the Kazakhs about health care, education, science and culture, the pace of reforms, and the protection of civil and human rights. Young Russians are as critical as their elders, except for a more widespread dissatisfaction with human rights and personal freedoms. Kazakh young adults express more dissatisfaction in all areas than their Kazakh elders. The data show that individuals satisfied with the observance of political rights and personal liberties in the country also tend to:

- see Kazakhstan as a democracy;

- applaud Kazakhstan’s declaration of independence;
- favor a multi-party system;
- have a favorable opinion of Nazarbayev.

The Independence of Kazakhstan

Nationwide, there is no consensus that the declaration of Kazakhstan as an independent state contributed to the well-being of the country. The most widely held view, albeit among a slim plurality, is that the decision to declare Kazakhstan independent was neither “a good thing” nor “a bad thing” (38%). Among the rest, more say it was “a good thing” (30%) than say it was “a bad thing” (20%). (See Table 3)

As would be expected, opinions on independence differ notably along national lines. Kazakhs generally view independence as a “good thing,” and only one-in-ten says a “bad thing.” Russians, however, tend to be neutral – volunteering that it is “neither good nor bad.” Opinion among young adults is very similar to that expressed by the general public. (Table 3)

Table 3. Declaration of Independence of Kazakhstan

“In your opinion, was the declaration of the independence of Kazakhstan a good thing or a bad thing for Kazakhstan?”

Percent Saying Independence Declaration was:	Total Adult Population	Total by Nationality		Young Adults	
		Kazakh	Russian	Kazakh	Russian
(Sample size)	(1500)	(598)	(641)	(83)	(197)
Good thing	31	49	29	51	18
Neither good or bad	35	29	44	36	53
Bad thing	21	11	15	2	20
Don't know	13	10	12	11	10
Total	100%	99%	100%	100%	101%

There are notable differences among demographic groups:

- The higher the education or the socio-economic level, the more widespread a positive view of independence.
- Residents of rural areas are more likely to approve of independence than those living in cities.

To explore attitudes towards the emergence of Kazakhstan as an independent country, the survey measured feelings about being a “Kazakhstani,” that is, seeing oneself as a resident of the country and identifying as a citizen (Table 4). Feelings of pride in being a Kazakhstani, as would be expected, differ along national lines:

- Kazakhs of all age groups have positive feelings about being Kazakhstani (24% feel “proud” and 42%

- are “content”); the young urbanites are particularly proud (55% feeling proud and 34% content).
- Among the Russian population, feelings towards Kazakhstan tend to be less positive. For the general public, roughly as many express positive feelings (8% proud and 43% content) as do not (40% are indifferent and 5% ashamed). By contrast, negative feelings prevail among the young Russian urbanites (54% are indifferent, 2% are ashamed; 34% are content and 5% proud).

Self-identification with a group – a national group or a resident of Kazakhstan – does not differ by education or place of residence. Except for the young Russians (those between 18 and 24), majorities of Kazakhs and Russians believe it is equally important to identify with a national group and with Kazakhstan by virtue of residence. However,

- Identification with nation or country is generally more important to Kazakhs than to Russians, among whom sizeable proportions say that neither self-identification is important (20% of the general public and 27% of the young adults).
- Russians are least likely to identify solely along ethnic lines (as noted above, majorities identify with a country or with both country and nationality); young Russians divide evenly between three options – identify with nationality, identify as a Kazakhstani, and volunteer that neither is important.

Those who identify as Kazakhstani also tend to:

- take pride in being a Kazakh,
- see Kazakhstan as a democracy, and
- approve of Nazarbayev

These data suggest that the sense of belonging to a state, of identifying as residents of Kazakhstan, is widely shared among the older population subgroups. As shown above, however, the sense of identification with a group is particularly important to the young, and especially to the Russian young. National identification is not critical in some countries. In Sweden, for example, identification as a nationalist is widespread. In a country with no tradition of a civil society forming its own political system, the issue of identification gains relevance to develop effective organizations and to support the transformation process.

Table 4. Identification with National Group and with Kazakhstan

“What is more important for you: your national identification or that you are a Kazakhstani (from Kazakhstan)?”

Percent Saying Identification is More Important	Total Adult Population	By Nationality		Young Adults	
		Kazakh	Russian	Kazakh	Russian
(Sample size)	(1500)	(598)	(641)	(83)	(197)
National identification	19	25	15	28	25
Kazakhstani	37	36	32	33	28
Both equally important (volunteered)	30	34	30	35	18
Neither is important (volunteered)	12	3	20	5	27
Don't know	2	2	3	0	2
Total	100%	100%	100%	101%	100%

Ethnic Relations and Personal Liberties

The public in Kazakhstan is convinced that inter-ethnic conflict will not erupt in their country. Nationwide and among young adults, most feel that ethnic relations will continue to be stable (31% say “permanently” and an additional 40% “for a long time”). Only one-in-ten (11%) say that the lack of conflict between ethnic groups will “come to an end rather soon.” Overall, Kazakhs are more positive about the long term stability of ethnic relations than Russians are, though majorities among all population subgroups believe that there will be no ethnic strife (Table 5).

Opinions on the stability of ethnic relations do not differ among demographic groups, except that expectation of long-term stability is slightly more widespread among rural than among urban residents. Moreover, predictions of stability are more likely to be heard among those who:

- say that Kazakhstan is a democracy;
- believe that the independence of Kazakhstan was a good thing;
- are proud to be Kazakhstani; and
- approve of Nazarbayev.

On this issue, individuals with different faiths variably predict ethnic relations:

- Expectations of long-term stability are much lower among those who profess the Orthodox faith (17% permanent and 42% long term) than those who profess Islam (45% permanent and 38% long term) or the non-believers (28% permanent and 40% long term).

Table 5. Perceived Future Relations Between National Groups

“What are your expectations for the condition of stability between ethnic groups in Kazakhstan today – stability will be maintained permanently, stability will be maintained for a rather long time, stability will be limited, stability will come to an end rather soon?”

Percent Saying That Future Ethnic Relations Will Be:	Total Adult Population	Total, by Nationality		Young Adults	
		Kazakh	Russian	Kazakh	Russian
(Sample size)	(1500)	(598)	(641)	(83)	(197)
Stable permanently	31	45	19	30	15
Stable for a long time	40	39	41	51	42
Stable for a short period	10	6	12	8	17
Stability will soon end	10	4	15	6	18
Don't know	9	6	12	5	9
Total	100%	100%	99%	100%	101%

Nationwide, no clear picture emerges concerning the observance of personal freedoms in the country, except that small proportions – less than ten percent – say that civil rights are “*not at all observed.*” The majority of Kazakhs of all ages agree that civil rights are at least “somewhat” observed. Russians are much more critical and Russian young adults tend to see minimal observance of civil rights. (Table 6)

Table 6. Observance of Civil Rights

“In your opinion, to what degree are civil rights (the rights of citizens) observed today in Kazakhstan – completely observed, somewhat observed, very little observed, or not at all observed?”

Extent of Perceived Observance of Civil Rights (in %):	Total Adult Population	Total by Nationality		By Nationality	
		Kazakh	Russian	Kazakh	Russian
(Sample Size)	(1500)	(598)	(641)	(83)	(197)
Fully, somewhat observed	47	56	41	66	33
Very little	31	29	34	29	54
Not at all	12	7	14	4	11
Don't know	11	9	11	1	2
Total	101%	101%	100%	100%	100%

As would be expected those who see civil rights observed are inclined to view Kazakhstan as a democracy and applaud its independence.

The public do not foresee any major upheavals in the country in the short term. A definite majority believe that conditions of law and order will improve or remain the same (23% and 41% respectively). One-in-three, however, believes that conditions will worsen. Opinions among young adults are comparable: 21% say law and order will improve, 47% it will remain the same, and 26% predict it will get worse.

The data suggest a public inclined to favor the protection and preservation of individuals rights and freedoms, but only by a small margin. A half reject the notion that “to establish order and discipline, it is necessary to limit the democratic rights and freedoms of citizens,” but 40% accept this proposition. A definite majority reject the proposition that “to establish order and discipline, it is necessary to have dictatorship” (56% disagree and 37% agree). (See Table 7)

Table 7. Order and Discipline versus Individual Freedoms

“How much do you agree with the following statements:

*In order to establish order and discipline, it is necessary to limit the political and civil rights of the people.
In order to establish order and discipline, is it necessary to have a dictatorship?”*

In order to have order and discipline, it is necessary to:		Total Adult Population	Total by Nationality		By Nationality	
			Kazakh	Russian	Kazakh	Russian
(Sample size)		(1500)	(598)	(641)	(83)	(197)
Limit political rights	Agree	44	46	40	29	25
	Disagree	45	44	50	66	63
	Don't know	11	10	10	5	12
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Establish a dictatorship	Agree	37	33	39	23	26
	Disagree	56	58	55	76	69
	Don't know	7	9	6	1	5
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Older subgroups, those over 55, are more willing to accept restrictions on freedoms and dictatorship than the younger population. Young urbanites, both Kazakhs and Russians, oppose this proposition most strongly:

- By more than a two-to-one margin, young adults disagree that to have order and discipline personal rights have to be curtailed or that a dictatorship is necessary.

Those with higher education are slightly more likely to reject the need for limiting political freedoms than the less educated ones. Two-thirds of the educated oppose the idea that a dictator is necessary to maintain law and order.

These data on attitudes towards civil rights bode well for the country's future stability. The wide differences on inter-ethnic relations suggest that ethnicity may become a disruptive factor. Ethnic feelings tend to be volatile and can be exploited for political ends. Young adults definitively reject the proposition that curtailing democratic rights is necessary to establish order. This strong rejection suggests that the young are committed to protecting political freedoms and personal liberties.

“Living in a Democracy”

The public in Kazakhstan defines democracy in terms of personal liberties and freedoms. When asked “what it means to live in a democracy,” the public volunteers these responses most frequently:

- “a society which observes human rights” (26%)
- “a society where individuals have personal freedoms and the freedom of choice” (18%)
- “living in an independent state” (19%)

Political factors apparently are not in the forefront when the public in Kazakhstan thinks of a democratic society (8% mention government by the people). Nor are economic reasons salient, only a few mention material well-being. Young adults share this hierarchy of definitions of a democratic society (41% mention “human rights,” 29% “freedom of choice,” and 16% an independent state).

There is near unanimity in Kazakhstan that it is necessary to educate “the young people about the democratic process so that they can help make good decisions about the future” (91%). Young adults endorse this view as widely (90%). These results suggest a public that values civic education and may be receptive to such programs.

Western Countries – Models for Kazakhs

All age groups share the view that western countries are models of development relevant to Kazakhstan. Germany is most frequently named (18%), followed by the United States, Turkey and Russia. A few say that no country is a model. Some observe that Kazakhstan should follow its own road. (See Table 8)

Generally, Russians name European more frequently than Kazakhs.

- Mainly Kazakhs mention Turkey (compare 18% of Kazakhs to 3% of Russians)
- More Russians than Kazakhs name Russia (compare 5% of Kazakhs and 12% of Russians).

Table 8. Country Named as Model for Kazakhstan

“Which foreign country, if any, do you think could be a model for Kazakhstan's development?”

Percent Naming Country as a Model for Kazakhstan (Sample size)	Total Adult Population (1500)
Germany	18
Other European	9
United States	11
Turkey	9
Russia	8
Japan	6
China	4
Uzbekistan	3
Other	18
No country	6
Don't know	22
Total	114%*

*Multiple responses were permitted

Economic Issues

Economic Future – Next Year, in 2000

As already noted, economic problems are the public's main concern and most frequently cited as the reasons for dissatisfaction with conditions in the country. In Kazakhstan, one-third of the public nationwide believes that in the next year the economic situation in the country will get worse (35%) and as many say it will stay the same (32%). Only one-in-four foresee improvement (23%).

The public is much more optimistic for the long term. A half (53%) believe that by the year 2,000 the economic situation in the country will be "better than it is now." Among the rest, as many say the condition will remain the same (15%) as say it will deteriorate (13%).

Young adults, Russians as well as Kazakhs, share the overall optimistic outlook of the general public about the year 2000 (60% say the economy will improve, 14% remain the same, and 11% deteriorate). They hold roughly similar views about the near future (30% get worse, 36% remain the same, and 25% improve).

Generally, Kazakhs are more optimistic about improvements in near future (33% of the Kazakhs and only 14% of the Russians see improvement in the next year). Kazakhs are also much more optimistic about the year 2000 – 62% of the Kazakhs and 44% of the Russians believe the situation will improve. By and large, optimism about the immediate and the distant future decreases with age. The most optimistic about the betterment of economic conditions are those who see Kazakhstan as a democracy, approve of Nazarbayev, and see independence as a good thing.

A large majority of the public (71%, and almost as many young adults - 61%) assert that "it is very hard for (my) family to buy enough food each month." These data underscore the depth of Kazakhstan's economic problems.

Direction of Economic Development

Opinion in Kazakhstan about the country's economic system suggests no consensus among demographic subgroups. Nationwide, opinion leans in favor of returning to the old system of a centrally controlled economy:

- Around half want the country to "return to an economy fully controlled by the state" (51%) rather than striving "to develop an economy with limited government control" (37%).

By contrast, young adults are unprepared to turn back the clock and return to state control of the economy, albeit by a small margin:

- a plurality want Kazakhstan to "develop an economy with limited government control" rather than "return to an economy fully controlled by the state"

Opinions on whether to change the economic system or return to the old one do not differ by nationality. Those with higher education generally prefer limited government involvement in the economy. The desire to return to a centrally controlled economy is most widespread among pensioners and those over 55. One political value

– support for a single party or for a multi-party system – correlates strongly with the issues of an economic system:

- Those who believe that there should be only one party in the country generally want to return to a state owned system (77% support a planned economy and 15% prefer a new economy).
- Those who support a multi-party system tend to favor, albeit by a small margin, a new economic system (48%) rather than returning to the old (40%).

The public, across all demographic groups (age, education, place of residence) and along nationality lines, prefer a slow-paced approach to the introduction of economic reforms. Definite majorities favor “steady but small reforms” rather than quick paced measures (62% to 27% among general public; 64% to 29% among young adults).

Opinions about the current pace of economic reforms are roughly comparable among all population subgroups. The opinion that reforms are proceeding too slowly prevails (nationwide 53%). A few volunteer that no reforms are taking place (14%). Only one-in-ten believes that reforms are proceeding too rapidly (12%) or with appropriate speed (12%). Young adults hold similar views (58% say reforms are proceeding too slowly, 10% no reforms taking place, 12% the pace is too rapid; and 14% reform are proceeding at an appropriate speed).

“Free Market” Economy

Public understanding of a free market economy focuses on freedom of choice and not on market forces. The public sees a free market economy mainly as a freedom to conduct of business (29% mention this). This perception also dominates the understanding of the concept among young adults.

In terms of frequency of mentions, references to an economy of well-being come second to describe a free market. Specifically, a high standard of living (7%), the possibility of making money by honest labor (5%), and the availability of goods and products (2%). Only a few mention the absence of monopolies (4%) or private property (5%). The concept of market forces as determinants of economic development is not uppermost in the public's mind.

Government

Confidence in Legal Institutions

By varying margins, the public lacks confidence in the country’s institutions for law and order. Young adults are more negative than the older public. Nationwide, among the general public, one-half to definite majorities lack confidence in the courts (52%), public prosecutors (54%), and the militia (61%; Table 9). Kazakhs tend to express more confidence than Russians.

Among young adults, lack of confidence prevails among much larger proportions than among the general public and is pervasive about the militia (Table 9). This pattern of much less confidence among young adults extends to the general population in that confidence increases with age. The fifty-five plus age group divides evenly on confidence in the public prosecutor, but lack of confidence prevails for all age groups to the courts and militia.

Table 9. Confidence Levels

“Please tell me how much confidence do you have in (these Institutions) to treat people with fairness and justice – a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or no confidence at all?”

Level of Confidence (in %)	Total Adult Population		Young Adults	
	Have confidence	Lack confidence	Have confidence	Lack confidence
Courts	43	51	34	62
Public Prosecutor	41	52	31	65
Militia	26	67	15	83

Attributes of a President

Honesty and leadership are two qualities the public in Kazakhstan consider important attributes of a President. Given a list of 10 characteristics, there is broad consensus that it is “important for a President of a Republic” to be “honest and trustworthy” (selected by 69%) and a “strong leader who can get things done” (59%). These attributes dominate across all population subgroups. Slightly fewer, around one-half, believe a President should “care(s) about the needs of people like me” (49%) and a smaller proportion expect the President to “promote tolerance between all people of Kazakhstan” (43%). A smaller proportion view that it is important for a President “to use everything in his power for the prevention of crime” (37%). (See Table 10)

Competence in foreign policy does not matter as much as the attributes already listed. About one- in-three see it as important for a President to “conduct active politics on the international scene” (33%) or “have close ties to Russia” (30%). (Table 10)

The preservation of Kazakh culture and traditional life, compared with other attributes, appears of low salience. Small proportions believe that a President should “protect the cultural heritage of the Kazakh people” (20%). One-in-ten selects that a President be “a family man with traditional values” (12%). (Table 10)

Table 10. Attributes of a President

“On this card is a list of qualities which a President of the Republic might or might not have. Please take this list and indicate the 4 qualities which you consider to be the most important.”

Percent Selecting Attribute as Desirable in a President	Total Adult Population	Young Adults
Honest, trustworthy	68	63
Strong leader	56	71
Cares about others	49	47
Promotes tolerance	42	44
Fights crime	37	38
Active internationally	33	37
Close ties with Russia	32	22
Has new reform ideas	22	32
Protects Kazakh heritage	22	14
Family man, has traditional values	14	7
Preserves old system	5	4
Total*	380%	379%

* Total is over 100% due to multiple responses

The list included attributes which addressed issues of reform. A minority believes it is important for a President to “have new ideas for reforming the country” (24%); only very few (4%) believed it is important for a President to “preserve(s) the old system.” (Table 10)

Opinions of young adults are roughly comparable – they also want an honest and strong leader, one who cares about the needs of the common people, and promotes tolerance. Young adults, similar to the general public, do not value traditional values, Kazakh culture, or the return to the old system.

Kazakhs and Russians rank order these attributes of a President in a roughly similar way, except, as would be expected, on the issue of relations with Russia:

- A small proportion (20%) of the Kazakhs see good relations with Russia as an important attribute, while among Russians twice as many (43%) say it is important.

Public perceptions about attributes “important” in a President demonstrate that the public is definitely uninterested in returning to the old system. They look for a trustworthy leader who would get things done.

Capabilities of Officials; Position of Deputies

The public expresses much more confidence in the capabilities of national rather than of local officials. One half say that “the officials in Almaty are capable of making real improvements (52% yes to 40% say no). Young adults, however, are much more critical – one half do not believe that officials in Almaty are capable of improving conditions (54%) and a third (37%) say they can. Rural residents have more faith in the capability of Republic officials to effect improvement (61% can to 27% cannot).

The most notable difference, however, is in the assessment of national groups:

- Among Kazakhs the prevailing view is that officials in Almaty can improve conditions (65% of the general public and 53% of the young adults).
- Among Russians the dominant view is that the officials in Almaty cannot (52% of the general public and 62% of young adults).

Additionally, opinion on the effectiveness of officials in Almaty reflects attitude on state-building in the country, specifically:

- Definite majorities of those who are proud (76%) or content (62%) in being Kazakhstani also believe that officials in Almaty can be effective. (Among the indifferent, 68% say the officials cannot be effective.)
- A vast majority (74%) of those who say Kazakhstan is a democracy see the officials as effective. Of those who say Kazakhstan is not a democracy, 60% find officials ineffective.
- A majority (59%) of those who approve of Nazarbayev also evaluate officials positively, whereas vast majority (75%) of those who disapprove of Nazarbayev say the officials are ineffective.

Lack of confidence in local officials is even more widespread. Nationwide, two-thirds of the general public (69%) and 77% of young adults do not believe that local officials can make improvements. Generally, Kazakhs are less critical of local officials than Russians:

- Among the general public 54% of the Kazakhs and 80% of the Russians do not believe that local officials can improve conditions.
- Among young adults, 67% of the Kazakhs and 82% of the Russians say local officials cannot improve conditions.

Additionally, those who do not believe that the independence of Kazakhstan is good or who deny that Kazakhstan is a democracy also tend to say that local officials have no possibility of improving conditions. Opinion on economic issues does not affect trust or distrust of local officials.

By a vote of five-to-one, the public wants Deputies of the Supreme Council to live in the districts and their jobs to be part-time (73%), rejecting the notion of full-time Deputies residing in Almaty (16%). Young adults hold the same position (71% part-time, 27% full-time).

Corruption of Officials

Official corruption is seen as pervasive and problematic. By a margin of nine-to-one, three fourths (77%) agree that the problem of official corruption is common (39% say “very” and 38% “fairly common”) and only a handful say it as rare (8%). An equally large majority (83%) view the problem as serious (50% “very” and 33% “fairly serious”). Russians view corruption as more serious and common than do Kazakhs.

The public see both national and local leaders as guilty of corruption. Asked who is more corrupt – local or national (“Republic”) officials – most make no choice and see both as corrupt (42% , an unusually high proportion for a volunteered response). Among the rest, more say that local officials are corrupt than say that national ones are corrupt.

Young adults share this critical view of officials (86% say it is a common problem and 88% that it is serious). They also volunteer that both local and national officials are corrupt (46%); among the rest, far more say that local officials are corrupt (26%) as say so about national officials (11%).

Is Kazakhstan a Democracy?

By a slim margin, a plurality say that Kazakhstan is a democracy (nationwide 42% to 33%), a view expressed by half of the total Kazakh population, but a third of the Russian. Young adults hold a parallel distribution of views – more Kazakhs than Russians say that the country is a democracy.

Age, education, attitudes towards economic issues, views on a multi-party system have no effect on the proposition that Kazakhstan is a democracy. Opinions on the independence and sovereignty of Kazakhstan do have an effect. People who take pride in being Kazakhstani and who applaud the declaration of independence tend to see the country as a democracy (Table 11).

Table 11. Understanding of Democracy

“And what do you think, is Kazakhstan a democratic state or not?”

	Is a Democracy	Is Not a Democracy
TOTAL POPULATION, Kazakh	52	27
TOTAL POPULATION, RUSSIAN	33	40
YOUNG ADULTS, Kazakh	54	34
YOUNG ADULTS, RUSSIAN	35	38
Proud to be Kazakhstani	58	24
Content to be Kazakhstani	47	30
Indifferent about being Kazakhstani	26	43
Independence of Kazakhstan, a good thing	60	20
Independence of Kazakhstan, a bad thing	31	45
Favorable opinion of Nazarbayev	48	29
Unfavorable opinion of Nazarbayev	16	62

Interest in Politics and Government

The public is divided as to “matters of politics and government.” About half say they are interested in politics and government and half say they are not interested (51% and 47% respectively). Interest among young adults is comparable (51% are and 48% are not interested). Interest in politics increases with education, but age make no difference.

Political and economic attitudes measured in this survey do not affect the degree of interest. For example, those who applaud the independence of Kazakhstan are as likely to express interest in politics as those who reject independence.

There is broad consensus, among the general public and the young adults, that politics does not appeal to the young. Nationwide, two-thirds agree that “young people don't care about politics” (79%; 27% disagree). To a somewhat lesser degree, young adults share this assessment (65% agree; 33% disagree).

Availability of Information

Availability of information is essential to a civil society and without public access to such, a public cannot participate in a country's political and economic life. Lack of information may lead to misunderstanding and misperceptions and hinder, if not undermine, development.

The IFES survey presents a public informed and aware of the country's political and economic developments and willing to respond to questions. The number of "don't know" and "no answer" responses are within acceptable ranges (2% to around 10%) and represent expected variations (the non-response rate decreases with education, increases with age, and is high for rural residents). Unusually high non-response rates are self-evident (in open-ended items, identification with parties).

Public perceptions on the availability of information in Kazakhstan suggest that communications may be at the core of some problems in state-building and the development of a civil society. One half of the general public say that they have at least a *fair amount* of information about political developments in the country. Slightly fewer – 43 percent – say there is *not very much information* or *nothing at all*.

Availability of information appears less about free market reforms. By a small margin, half (49%) say that there is too little information and a smaller proportion say there is information. Young adults are divided on this issue – roughly as many say that there is at least a fair amount as say not very much or nothing at all. (Table 12)

Table 12. Availability of Information

"How much information do you feel you have about the political developments of the Republic – a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or nothing at all?"

"How much information do you feel you have about the so-called free market reforms underway in Kazakhstan – a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or nothing at all?"

Availability of Information (in %)		Total Adult Population	Young Adults
(Sample size)		(1500)	(341)
On Political Developments	Great deal, fair amount	50	43
	Not much, nothing at all	43	47
On Free Market Reforms	Great deal, fair amount	43	38
	Not much, nothing at all	49	37

Opinion about the availability of information does not differ by education, age, or along nationality lines. None of the attitudes measured in this survey correlate with opinion on the availability of information, except for a

slightly broader expression of satisfaction with the level of information among those who applaud the independence of Kazakhstan.

Moreover, a large majority (74%) feel that they “don't have enough information about (my) rights with regard to the authorities” (20% disagree with the proposition). This perceived insufficiency of information is slightly more pronounced among Russians than Kazakhs. Young urbanites, both Kazakhs and Russians, also feel a lack of information about authorities (78% agree and 19% disagree). Lack of information about authorities is most widespread among those who do not see Kazakhstan as a democracy and disapprove of Nazarbayev.

Non-Governmental Organizations

Civil Associations

At this time, public opinion in Kazakhstan does not yield any clearly defined view towards the establishment of civic organizations. The data suggest a public aware of the need for such organizations, but unsure whether current conditions in the country are conducive to the formation of community organizations, associations, or parties.

Nationwide, one-half agree that “citizens of Kazakhstan have the possibility to unite into associations, unions, without state participation to improve their living conditions” (52%). Roughly half as many deny that this describes the current conditions. Young adults share this overview of conditions in their country. Half of the adults, and a majority of young adults, believes it is necessary for citizens of Kazakhstan to have associations and unions without state participation. One half of the public as believes that it is necessary to have civil organizations, a view much more widely held among young adults. (Table 13)

Table 13. Civil Organizations in Kazakhstan

“In your opinion, do citizens of Kazakhstan have the possibility of unite into groups, unions, without the participation of the government in order to better their living conditions?”

“Are such organizations necessary?”

Opinion About the Future of Civil Organizations in Kazakhstan (in %)	Total Adult Population	Young Adults
(Sample size)	(1500)	(341)
Environment is conducive to forming organizations:		
Yes	52	50
No	25	37
Don't know	23	14
Civil organizations are necessary:		
Yes	49	66
No	23	18
Don't know	28	16

Opinion about civil organizations differs among demographic groups:

- Russians are more likely to see opportunities for forming civil organizations than Kazakhs (compare Russians 57% to Kazakhs 46%).

- Majorities of those under 45 believe that civil organizations can be organized in Kazakhstan, a view held by a third of the older subgroups.

Given a choice of 10 possible organizations, public favors educational, environmental, youth organizations, social services, consumer rights, and women's organizations. As would be expected, young adults are attracted to youth organizations – a fourth say they would join one. Those willing to join women's organizations are almost exclusively women. Over one-third of the public and one-fourth of young adults would not join any organization. (Table 14)

Table 14. Interest in Community Organizations*

"Which type of organization or association would you join?"

Would join "type" of organization (in %)	Total Adult Population	Young Adults
(Sample size)	(1500)	(341)
Educational	12	16
Environmental	12	17
Social services	12	13
Youth	6	27
Women's issues	10	7
Consumer rights	8	14
Religious	4	5
Ethnic	4	3
Community-political	2	3
Political party	3	1
None of the above	6	13
Would not join any organization (Volunteered)	39	20
Total	118%	139%

*Multiple responses were permitted.

Political Parties

Overall, public favors a multi-party system, but this commitment is not as broad as the support for civil rights or for personal freedoms. Nationwide, a definite majority believes that there should be more than one party in Kazakhstan (59%). Young adults support a multi-party system more widely (67% say there should be two or more parties). Few want a system with two-parties (only 7% of the general public and 5% of young adults); having several parties is much more widely favored. (Table 15).

Around a fifth – of the general public as well as young adults – believe that a single party would be ideal (22% of the general public, 18% young adults). A few (6% of the general public and 5% of young adults) believe that there should be no parties in Kazakhstan. Together the proponents of a one-party system and those who want “no parties” present a sizeable minority who probably would oppose the emergence of a multi-party system in Kazakhstan (29% of the general public and 23% of the young adults).

Table 15. Number of Political Parties

“What do you think would be the ideal number of political parties to have – none, one, two, several, or as many as we have today?”

Ideal Number of Political Parties (in %)	Total Adult Population	Young Adults
(Sample size)	(1500)	(341)
None	7	4
One	23	18
Two	7	6
Several	34	42
As many as there are	14	22
Don't know	14	8
Total	100%	100%

On the issue of the ideal number of political parties:

- Kazakhs and Russians hold very similar views.
- Support for a multi-party system increases with education.
- Support for a single party increases slightly with age.

- Persons identifying themselves as low socio-economic level tend to prefer a single party system.
- Those who want to return to the state-controlled economy favor a single party system (among those who a return to the old economic system, 30% want a single party, 7% a two-party and 31% a multi-party system).
- Those who want limited government involvement in the economy generally favor a multi-party system (52% a multi-party and 5% a two-party system; only 8% want a single party and 5% no party)

The overall low level of identification with any one political party hinders the emergence of a multi-party system in Kazakhstan. Only the Movement Nevada-Semipalatinsk attracts a following in two digits (10% of adults nationwide identify with the party). Other parties attract followers in single digits. As importantly, large proportions among the general public (43% of the Kazakhs and 47% of the Russians) do not see any organization (“*political parties or social movements*”) as representing their views and interests. Young adults, in contrast, do identify with political parties and movements. Parties with a following in double digits are:

- Movement Nevada-Semipalatinsk, drawing more Kazakhs than Russians
- People of Unity of Kazakhstan, appealing to both national groups
- Democratic Committee on Human Rights, equally appealing to both Kazakhs and Russians
- Zheltoksan, attracting mainly Kazakhs

The very low level of identification with most of the political parties precludes any analysis of the kind of individuals that coalesce around a political party. The recurrence of some patterns, do allow for these very broad generalizations:

- Young adults are more likely to identify with a party than other segments of the population.
- The appeal of the Communist Party increases with age.

Table 16. Identification with a Political Party

“Which of the political parties or social movements listed below best represents he views and interests of people like you?”

Personally Identify With Political Party (in %)	Total Adult Population	Total by Nationality		Young Adults	
		Kazakh	Russian	Kazakh	Russian
(Sample size)	(1500)	(598)	(641)	(83)	(197)
Movement Nevada-Semipalatinsk	9	13	8	23	14
People of Unity of Kazakhstan	7	8	5	10	11
Communist	8	7	10	2	2
Democratic Committee on Human Rights	6	5	7	10	11
Azat	4	0	0	4	1
Slavic Movement Lad	3	0	6	0	8
Zheltoksan	3	6	0	11	2
Renaissance	2	3	2	2	3
Peoples Congress of Kazakhstan	2	3	1	5	4
Organizations of Cossacks	2	0	5	0	5
Democratic Order	2	3	1	4	2
Russian Commune	2	0	3	1	5
Alash	2	4	0	0	0
Social Democratic	1	0	1	1	3
Socialist	1	2	1	1	1
Tabigat Party of Social Fairness	1	1	1	4	2
Republican	1	2	0	2	0
Russian Union	1	0	3	0	4
Do not identify with any party, Don't know	43	43	47	19	24
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The low identification with a political organizations probably expresses alienation from if not hostility to political parties. This lack of identification with parties may also reflect some of the dislike that individuals have towards political parties in general and not necessarily to any one party in particular. Not only do 43 percent nationwide not identify with any one party, but by a three-to-one ratio the public prefer an unaffiliated candidate for the Supreme Council:

- A majority would support a non-party candidate (60% general public, 66% of young adults).
- Far fewer would vote for a candidate who identifies with a political party (18% of the general public, 14% of young adults).

The low level of identification with political parties may also be a communications problems – the lack of party leaders to clearly enunciate their positions and views, to present a party platform to the public. The indefinite picture that emerges from the question which sought to measure if the public sees differences between the various parties supports this conclusion. Opinion is divided almost evenly among those who see clear differences and those who do not. As worrisome, from the point of view of building constituencies, is that a large proportion – one fourth – give no opinion on this issue.

Table 17. Differences Among Political Parties

“In your opinion are there clear differences among the various political parties in how they would solve the important problems that confront Kazakhstan or there are no clear differences among the parties?”

Difference Among Political Parties (in %)	Total Adult Population	Total by Nationality		Young Adults	
		Kazakh	Russian	Kazakh	Russian
(Sample size)	(1500)	(598)	(641)	(83)	(197)
Yes, do exist	35	34	36	36	38
No, do not exist	38	36	41	48	43
Don't know	28	30	23	16	19
Total	101%	100%	100%	100%	100%

A question which sought to determine public opinion of the Communist Party illustrates this lack of familiarity with activities of political parties. Two-thirds (64%) give no opinion as to their overall view of the Communist Party – favorable or unfavorable. Among the rest, as many have a favorable (17%) as an unfavorable opinion (20%). In view of the high incidence of non-response, higher than on most other issues examined in this survey, the public are either reticent to express an opinion about the Communist Party or feel poorly informed about the Party.

Participatory Democracy

Election Laws

Knowledge about election laws appears limited. Most – around one-half of the general public (49%) and slightly more young adults (53%, combining all young adults) – do not know anything about election laws. Among the rest, a fifth are familiar with the general principles and a few have heard about the election laws in some detail. Like the general public, young adults are equally uninformed about election laws.

Table 18. Knowledge about Election Laws

“How much do you know about the election laws of Kazakhstan?”

Extent of Familiarity with Election Laws (in %):	Total Adult Population	Total by Nationality		Young Adults	
		Kazakh	Russian	Kazakh	Russian
(Sample size)	(1500)	(598)	(641)	(83)	(197)
Know fairly well	3	5	2	2	1
Familiar with basic principles	22	25	20	27	13
Heard something	25	29	24	24	34
Know nothing	47	36	53	43	52
Don't know	3	4	2	4	2
Total	100%	101%	101%	100%	102%

Overall, Kazakhs tend to be slightly more informed than Russians about election laws (compare 40% of Kazakhs to 55% of Russians have heard nothing or do not respond). As would be expected, the higher the education, the more informed the individual (among those who completed higher education, only 30% “know nothing” or “don’t know”).

In view of the widespread lack of knowledge about election laws, it is not surprising that the public refrains from expressing an opinion about reforming elections laws. A majority (53%) express no opinion and among the rest, slightly more believe that there is a need to reform these laws (27%) as say that reforms are not necessary (20%). Opinion of young adults is similar (47% give no response, 34% say reforms are needed and 19% not).

Those familiar with election laws provided suggestions on the areas in need of reform, specifically:

- Observance of democratic principles in the election system (mentioned by 13%)
- Publicize the nomination process of candidates (8%).
- Introduce definitive laws which too govern elections (6%).
- Have strict standards concerning candidates (5%).

- Ensure the independence of the Election Committees (4%).

Overall, the public accepts the current practice of voiding an election if less than a half of the electorate participate. Most agree that “if in an electoral district less than 50 percent of the voters participate, than no one can be elected as Deputy to Parliament and, therefore that District will not have representation in Parliament.”

- Nationwide, definite majority say such a practice is fair (61%) and one fifth (21%) believe that the practice is unfair.
- Young adults express even broader agreement that such a practice is fair (72% say it is fair, 19% not).

The public does not support the requirement that a winner must receive 50 percent of the electorate, even if there are 5 or 6 candidates. By a two-to-one ratio, the general public supports giving the election to the candidate who receives most of the votes cast (63%), and rejects the requirement that the winner get at least half of all votes in the district (29%). Young adults share this view (58% would declare a candidate with most votes as the winner; 36% would require that a winner receive 50 percent of all votes).

These data suggest a public that would entertain reform measures in the laws. As already noted, election laws are not an area that the public endorses broadly. Opinion divides almost evenly about elections laws, with as many being dissatisfied (42%) as satisfied (40%) with the current laws. As importantly, in view of the low level of familiarity with election laws, this issue could use some promotional work given the importance of elections in an emerging country.

Nomination of Candidates

Large majorities agree that labor collectives, community organizations, and political parties should nominate candidates for the Supreme Soviet. All demographic groups share these perceptions widely. The general public also broadly supports having voters at the place of residence nominate candidates, a view that young adults support less widely. The public is much less definite about the nomination of candidates by other organizations or groups. (See Table 19)

By a slim margin half or a plurality support the view that local communities should nominate candidates. Opinion is divided on whether the local administrator should nominate candidates.

Table 19. Nomination of a Candidate

“In your opinion, which of the following organizations should and which should not have the right to nominate candidates for standing elections for the Supreme Soviet?”

“How much do you know about the election laws of Kazakhstan?”

Groups Who Should Nominate Candidates for Supreme Soviet (in %)	Total Adult Population	Total by Nationality		Young Adults	
		Kazakh	Russian	Kazakh	Russian
(Sample size)	(1500)	(598)	(641)	(83)	(197)
Labor collective	85%	80	89	82	85
Community organization	79	75	82	81	80
Political party	75	73	75	86	80
Voters of a residential area	69	69	69	65	51
Local communities	50	52	48	54	44
President's Administration	48	50	49	52	42
President personally	44	48	42	42	38
Local administrators	43	45	43	52	39

The public appears undecided as to the President's role in nominating candidates for the Supreme Soviet. As many say the President should “nominate his own list of candidates” (44%) as say he should not (42%). The public is more willing to assigning the role of nominating candidates to the Presidential Administration (48% say they should nominate candidates to 34% should not). Young adults are divided on whether the President personally should nominate candidates (47% no to 39% yes), or whether the Presidential administration should (46% yes, 41% no).

Those who agree that the President and the Presidential office should name candidates tend to also:

- view Kazakhstan as a democracy, and
- have a favorable opinion of Nazarbayev

Moreover, nationwide the public definitely opposes the President appointing a number of deputies for the Supreme Soviet.

- A definite majority (62%) of the general public are opposed to “have the President name a certain number of Deputies to the Supreme Soviet (27% favor).
- Young adults are as definitive, three-fourths (76%) oppose giving the President this right and less than a fifth (16%) would give the President the authority to name Deputies.
- Among the general public, opposition to such nominations is much more widespread among Russians than Kazakhs (compare, Russian – 68% oppose to 23% support; Kazakhs – 44% oppose to 32%

support), whereas among young adults opinions do not differ among national groups.

Not unexpectedly, opinion on the President's right to nominate Deputies correlates with attitudes about the current political scene, particularly among opponents to granting this right. Opposition to granting this to the President is particularly widespread among those who:

- have an unfavorable opinion of Nazarbayev (among this group, 86% oppose to 8% favor);
- deny that Kazakhstan is a democracy (75% oppose to 20% support); and
- view the independence of Kazakhstan as a "bad thing" (70% oppose to 20% support).

Voting

Voting – the means by which publics can affect change – is one of the most basic aspects of participatory democracy. Voting represents a structured and formal method that gives the public a voice in the decision-making process of a country. In Kazakhstan, the survey data show widespread participation in elections, but no corollary sense of empowerment. Data show many with skepticism about elections. To examine the opinion about elections, the following proposition was presented: "by participating in an election, citizens of Kazakhstan can substantively influence the course of development in the country."

- Nationwide, as many believe that by voting citizens can influence the course of developments as reject this proposition (46% to 42%; Table 20).
- Young adults tend to be more skeptical than the general public and doubt that voting is empowerment. Among the young adults, by a wide margin, reject the proposition (60% all young adults to 34%)

Perceptions of empowerment vary along nationality lines. Kazakhs are much more likely to believe that voting is empowerment, whereas Russians are much more skeptical, especially young adults.
(Table 20)

This skeptical view of the voters' impact, however, does not appear to deter public participation in elections. Generally, going to the polls is much more widespread among the general public than among young adults, not surprisingly in view of the more skeptical view of the young about the role of voting. Among the general public, about two-thirds recalled voting in the March 1994 elections and in the 1995 referendum, whereas among the young adults, 40% voted in the March 1994 elections and half voted in the referendum.

Table 20. Going to the Polls

*“In your opinion, by participating in an election, can citizens of Kazakhstan
can substantively influence the course of development in the country?”*

*“Did you vote in the March 1994 elections?
Did you vote in the referendum elections?” (1995)*

Opinion about voting and participation in elections (in %):	Total Adult Population	Total by Nationality		By Nationality	
		Kazakh	Russian	Kazakh	Russian
(Sample size)	(1500)	(589)	(641)	(83)	(197)
Voting empowers citizens	42	51	33	49	27
Voting is not empowerment	46	34	56	42	69
Voted in March 1994 elections	69	74	64	48	36
Voted in referendum, 1995	73	79	68	61	50

The data show that voting is considered a responsibility of citizens. In Kazakhstan voting is not a privilege but a duty. Given eight different reasons for voting, the one most frequently selected is that voting is a “a duty of a citizen” (43%). Only one in ten select any of the following reasons: “to have a voice in the destiny of the country,” to ensure that “representatives at the highest level of government would have my interests,” or to ensure “that my city (region) would have representation in the high government organs.”

Only a few voted because of a personal preference of a candidate – because “I liked one of the candidates” (6%) or to express support for a party – “voted because I am a supporter of one of the political parties” (2%).

Table 21. Reasons for Voting

“On this card are several reasons which may have prompted you to vote. Please select the ones which are reasons why you voted.”

Percent Selecting Item As Reason for Voting:	Total Adult Population	Young Adults
(Sample size)	(1500)	(341)
Duty of a citizen	69	60
To have a voice in the future	16	17
To have regional representation	10	13
Have own interests and concerns represented	11	5
Eventually get favors from the government	10	4
Liked a candidate	9	11
Supported a political party	3	4
Feared consequences if did not vote	5	4
Don't know	1	0
Not asked (did not vote)	37	60

Given fifteen reasons for not voting – ranging from problems in getting to the polling place, disliking all candidates, distrusting all elections, or even alienation from the political process – no one reason stands out as the prevailing cause for not participating, except for a belief that voting does not count, a conviction that “voting would not change anything” (selected by 12%). Only a few chose other reasons.

Problems at the Polling Place

To assess what, if any, problems were encountered at the polling place, those who participated in the March elections or the 1995 referendum, were asked to identify problem (from a list of 11) which they encountered. As the table below shows, few identified the location, the physical arrangement, or the behavior of election officials as problems. Nor was there concern that the vote was not secret. The one vote one person assumption about voting is not a practice in Kazakhstan. Around half of the public either witnessed one person casting votes for others or even participated in such:

- Nationwide about half (46%) and as many young adults (54%) witnessed one person casting a number of votes.

Nor does the appearance of the ballot present any problems. Few (5%) see it as confusing, or favoring a particular candidate. Almost all agree that the ballot did not contain anything “which encouraged one to vote

in a certain way” (71%, 1% saw something, 4% did not know and 24% were not asked since they did not participate in an election). (Table 22)

Table 22. Practices Encountered at Polling Station

Problems Encountered at Polling Station (% selecting problem from a list)	Total Adult Population	Young Adults
SECRECY OF VOTE I know of cases where people voted on behalf of family members or neighbors, that is one person voted for a number of people	29	59
I personally voted in such a way (i.e. placed votes for others)	14	30
I saw groups of people voting together without a secret ballot	8	17
I felt that my ballot was not kept secret, and that anyone could learn how I voted	4	7
When I arrived at the polling place, someone had already voted for me	1	3
CAMPAIGNING Campaigning on behalf of a candidate occurred on election day	6	11
ELECTION OFFICIALS Election officials at the voting place were not helpful and could not respond to any questions concerning voting	5	6
Election officials at the voting place tried to tell me whom to vote for	4	3
PLACE OF VOTING The polling place was not convenient	3	3
The polling place was not well equipped, in the areas for voting there were no pens or pencils	3	6
The ballot was confusing	7	3

Perceptions about these problems were roughly comparable among all demographic groups.

Central Election Commission

The public appears convinced that the same people who managed the election before independence still run elections in Kazakhstan. Three-fourths of the general public agree with the proposition that “the same people who have always been running things” are still running elections (42% “all of the election officials are the same people” and 34% “some were new, some old”). Only a few (6%) say that these were not the same people. Young adults hold these perceptions just as widely.

Table 23. Election Officials – New or Old?

“Did you notice that the people who run the elections are pretty much the same people who have been always running things in our community, or were these new people?”

Percent Saying Election Officials were:	Total Adult Population	Total by Nationality		By Nationality	
		Kazakh	Russian	Kazakh	Russian
The same people as before	42	38	44	21	37
Some new, some old	34	39	28	53	35
New people	8	10	7	5	7
Don't know	16	14	20	21	21
Total	100%	100%	99%	100%	100%

The public are not familiar with the Central Elections Commission (CEC). Nationwide, a definite majority (57%) have heard “*nothing at all*” about the CEC and an additional 29% have heard “*very little*.” This lack of awareness is as widespread among young adults (64% heard nothing at all and 32% very little). Among the rest, information appears very limited – most are only slightly aware of the CEC (13% of the general public and 4% of young adults). Only one-in-ten have heard a fair amount about the CEC.

Among those aware of the CEC, opinion is divided as to whether the Commission is a neutral body or favors specific candidates. Equal proportions, among the general public as well as the young adults, believe the CEC of Kazakhstan is “a completely neutral body, guided in its work only by the law” (13% general public; 9% young adults) as say it “makes decisions which favor particular candidates or which the government wants” (15% general public; 16% young adults).

Conclusions – What Does it all Mean

The IFES-commissioned survey in Kazakhstan, fielded this past July, 1995, shows:

- A public concerned about the country's economic situation and, although not expecting much change in the near future, hopeful that by the year 2000 conditions will have improved.
- Public opinion does not allow predicting what direction the public would like the economy to take. Nationwide, a half would return to an economy fully controlled by the state; young urban adults, however, prefer, albeit by a slim margin, to venture into an economic system with limited government involvement.
- There is no consensus on whether the independence of Kazakhstan has contributed to the well-being in the country. Among Kazakhs the prevailing opinion is that the declaration of independence was a "good thing," whereas Russians are more likely to see it as a "bad thing." At the root of these perceptions may be the many economic problems confronting individuals, the sense of insecurity about the immediate future, and, as importantly, a lack of public identification with the state, with Kazakhstan as an independent and sovereign entity.
- The public is quite confident that relations among national groups in Kazakhstan will not erupt into strife and will remain stable, a prediction shared by individuals in both of Kazakhstan's major national groups, the Kazakh as well as the Russian.
- Young adults residing in the country's major centers, Kazakhs as well as Russians, are committed to individual freedoms and reject the notion that order and discipline require curtailing democratic rights and the establishment of a dictatorship. The general public, in contrast, is divided – as many believe that limits on freedoms and a dictatorship are necessary to have order, as such is not the case.
- Insufficiency of information appears a concern of the public and probably explains the limited support expressed for new directions. Sizeable proportions in all age and educational groups feel that information is not readily available about political developments and economic reforms.
- Attitudes towards non-governmental organizations are mixed. Among the general public, as well as young adults, around half agree that the environment in Kazakhstan is conducive to the formation of such organizations. Moreover, a half of the general public, but two-thirds of the young adults, consider it necessary to have such organizations in Kazakhstan.
- A small majority support a multi-party system. However, sizeable proportions – a third nationwide and one-fourth of young adults – favor a single-party system or "no parties at all."
- Political parties do not fare well in terms of public support. None of the parties attract a sizeable following (nationwide, identification with any one political party ranges from 1% to 9%). This low

level of identification with parties probably reflects the largely negative perceptions about political parties.

- The unpopularity of political parties is underscored by the frequently voiced preference (of a definite majority) for candidates not affiliated with any political party. Historical reasons may explain some of this aversion to parties, and some may be due to the lack of information about parties. These sentiments, however, do not suggest disinterest in taking an active role in the country's political life. A large majority believe that labor unions and community organizations should have the right to nominate candidates for the Supreme Soviet.
- Although there is broad participation by the public in the elections, there is no corollary sense of empowerment. Voting is seen mainly as a duty of a citizen, not a privilege or a process whereby the public can have a voice in the country's decision-making.

On some political and economic issues public opinion in Kazakhstan is mixed, suggesting that values and attitudes in Kazakhstan may be undergoing reassessment. The importance of this transitional process cannot be underestimated, nor the very critical role of communications to inform and thus promote public participation in the country's political and economic life. The relationship between general values and specific issues is well illustrated by opinion on Presidential attributes and reasons for the broad approval of President Nazarbayev: Attributes selected as the most important for a President are very similar to the reasons given for approval of President Nazarbayev, who receives resounding support and admiration (81% of the general public and 76% of the young adults approve of his work).

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