





# **PUBLIC OPINION IN AZERBAIJAN 2005**

## **Findings from a Public Opinion Survey**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fieldwork for the 2005 IFES survey in Azerbaijan was implemented between June 4 and 26, 2005, throughout Azerbaijan. The base national sample for the survey was 1,500 interviews distributed, in proportion to the population, throughout the various regions of Azerbaijan. The sample is also representative of the urban/rural population distribution in each region of the country. In addition to the base sample, an over-sample of 620 interviews was implemented in select urban localities: Barda, Ganja, Guba-Khachmaz, Lenkoran and Zaqatala. The national percentages cited in this report are based on all 2,120 interviews where the interviews have been weighted for appropriate urban/rural and regional distribution. The report also cites data from eight focus groups that were conducted after the completion of the survey to gain further insight into responses to the survey. These focus groups were conducted with residents of Baku, Barda, Ganja, Guba-Khachmaz, Lenkoran, and Zaqatala. The margin of error for the survey sample is plus/minus 2.1%. All interviews were conducted in respondents' homes and in their language of choice (Azeri 89%, Russian 11%). Fieldwork for both the survey and focus groups was conducted by a local research firm.

In addition to findings from the 2005 survey, the report also compares data from this survey with similar surveys conducted by IFES in Azerbaijan from 2002 to 2004. All of those surveys were also designed to be representative of the national population.

Some of the key findings from the research are detailed below.

### I. THE SOCIOECONOMIC SITUATION

**Satisfaction with Overall Situation in Country:** There has been a decline from 2004 to 2005 in the level of satisfaction with the overall situation in the country. A majority are dissatisfied (55%, compared to 47% in 2004), while 43% are satisfied (50% in 2004). Further analysis and focus group discussions indicate that negative perceptions of the economic situation are the primary cause for dissatisfaction with the overall situation.

**Current Economic Situation:** Negative perceptions of the current economic situation have increased since the 2004 survey. Forty-eight percent of respondents in this year's survey feel that the economic situation is good (54% in 2004) while an equal percentage feel that the economic situation is bad (38% in 2004). Similar negative sentiments are expressed with regard to respondents' family economic situation. In total, 58% describe their family's economic situation as very or somewhat bad, while 41% describe it as very or somewhat good.

**Key Issues for Azerbaijan:** Economic issues dominate the list of national concerns cited by Azerbaijanis. When asked to describe the biggest issue facing Azerbaijan, 73% name Karabakh, 36% unemployment, 19% low standards of living, 9% corruption and 7% the improvement of social protections such as pensions. Few mention democratic reforms or rights. When respondents are asked to name the factors limiting a better life in Azerbaijan (in another question), 30% cite unemployment, 18% a low standard of living, 18% low salaries or pensions, and 11% corruption.

**Expectations for Future Economy:** More Azerbaijanis than not are optimistic about economic conditions in one year's time. A plurality of Azerbaijanis (48%) believes that the national economic situation will be better in one year's time, 26% believe that economic conditions will stay the same, and 8% believe that they will get worse. With regard to their family's economic situation, a plurality of Azerbaijanis believes that their family's economic situation in one year will be better (39%), 29% believe that their family's economic situation in one year will be the same as now, and 12% believe it will be worse. Focus group participants stress that for economic development to take place in Azerbaijan, changes in administration will have to take place and anti-corruption efforts will have to become a focus.

**Non-Oil Economy:** Most Azerbaijanis (59%) are not aware of any efforts to develop the non-oil economy, while 30% say they are aware of such efforts. When asked what steps the government should take to develop the non-oil economy, the most oft-mentioned responses were the development of agriculture (18%), the development of industry (14%) and the opening of job-creation enterprises (10%).

## II. POLITICS AND ELECTIONS

**Interest in Politics:** Interest in politics in Azerbaijan has steadily risen since the 2002 IFES survey, and 65% in the current survey say that they are very or somewhat interested in politics. Thirty-four percent say they are not interested. Interest in politics is higher among men than women and higher among middle-aged Azerbaijanis than their younger compatriots. Television is the primary source for news about politics. Forty-two percent of Azerbaijanis say that they watch television every day for news and a further 30% watch it a few times a week.

**Political and Voter Efficacy:** Similar to previous surveys, the majority of respondents in this survey believe that people like them have little influence on politics (66%). There is a stronger belief in the influence of voting as 46% say that voting gives people like them a chance to influence decision-making, while 42% disagree with this.

**Information About Elections:** When respondents to the survey are asked whether they have enough information about political developments to make wise choices when voting, only 10% of Azerbaijanis say they do. Forty-six percent say they have some information, 36% say they have very little, and 7% say they have no information to help them make a wise choice when voting. Those with information are more likely to vote in elections in Azerbaijan than those with little or no information. There is also limited information about the election process. Forty-nine percent of Azerbaijanis say that they are either fully or somewhat informed about the election process in Azerbaijan, while an equal percentage say they do not have much or any information about the election process.

**Likelihood of Voting in 2005 Parliamentary Elections:** When asked how likely they are to vote in the parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan, a little more than a third (38%) say they are certain to vote, 31% are likely to vote, 8% are not likely to vote and 14% are certain not to vote. Rural residents are more likely to vote than urban residents, and men are more likely to vote than women.

**Expected Fairness of Parliamentary Elections:** Fourteen percent of respondents believe that the elections will be completely fair while 5% say that they will not be fair at all. The rest of the respondents ascribe some limited fairness to the election process for seats in Parliament. Many participants in the focus groups cite pressure from international organizations as well as the presence of international observers as factors that may lead to more fairness in the parliamentary elections than in previous elections in Azerbaijan.

## III. POLITICAL PARTIES

**Necessity and Effectiveness of Political Parties:** A quarter of Azerbaijanis (25%) think that political parties are essential for democracy in Azerbaijan, 35% think they are somewhat necessary and 26% think they are not very or not at all necessary. These results are similar to results from previous IFES surveys in Azerbaijan. The belief that political parties are necessary increases with interest in politics. However, most Azerbaijanis do not believe that parties are effective in presenting their ideas to the public. A quarter of Azerbaijanis (25%) think that parties are very or somewhat effective in presenting their ideas, but 42% believe they are ineffective, and a further 23% state that they do not know of any ideas from political parties. Even a plurality of those interested in politics thinks that political parties are ineffective in presenting ideas to the public.

**Parties that Represent Aspirations:** When respondents are asked to name a political party that represents the aspirations of people like them, 42% say that none of the parties in Azerbaijan represents their aspirations. Thirty-nine percent name Yeni Azerbaijan (YAP), 6% Musavat, 2% the Popular Front

Party, and 2% other parties. YAP is the most mentioned party in all regions of the country but is named least often in Absheron (17%) and Sheki (25%).

While a majority of those satisfied with the current situation in the country (based on assessments of overall situation as well as current/future economic situation) say that YAP represents their aspirations, opposition parties cannot capitalize on those dissatisfied with the current situation in the country. A majority of these respondents say that none of the parties represent their aspirations.

#### IV. DEMOCRACY, RULE OF LAW AND CORRUPTION

**Azerbaijani Democracy:** The percentage of Azerbaijanis who say Azerbaijan is a democracy has declined from 46% in the 2004 survey to 37% in this year's survey. The percentage who say that Azerbaijan is not a democracy has increased from 20% to 26%, and the percentage who say it has elements of both a democracy and a non-democracy has increased from 20% to 28%. When asked what it means to live in a democracy, most respondents cite freedoms.

**Opinions on Judicial System:** There is a great deal of dissatisfaction with the judicial system in Azerbaijan. More than six in ten Azerbaijanis disagree that the judicial system is unbiased, that it protects them from unjust treatment by the state, or that if they were wrongly accused of a crime, the judicial system would be sure to acquit them. The more likely one is to have negative impressions of the judicial system, the more likely one is to think that Azerbaijan is not a democracy.

**Experience with Corruption:** There has been an increase in the perception and reported incidence of corruption since the 2004 IFES survey in Azerbaijan. Data from the current survey indicates an increase in the incidence of paying or being asked for bribes by public officials. Forty-nine percent of Azerbaijanis report having paid a bribe to a public official in the past (up from 33% in 2004). The percentage who say they have never been asked for a bribe has declined from 33% in 2004 to 26% in this year's survey.

The primary reasons for paying bribes were for medical care and for grades at school or university. These two reasons for paying bribes were also most often mentioned in the 2004 survey. A change from the 2004 survey is that many more Azerbaijanis in this year's survey report paying bribes to obtain passports or other official documents.

Given the high incidence of corruption in Azerbaijan, it is not surprising that many Azerbaijanis feel it is justified to pay bribes for specific services. A majority of Azerbaijanis believe it is sometimes or always justified to pay a bribe to a doctor for medical care, and more than 40% also believe that it is justified to pay for good grades for their children. Skepticism among most focus group participants that the benefits of Azerbaijan's oil resources will flow down to ordinary people is also driven by the presence of pervasive corruption in the country, and the general feeling is that much of the oil revenues will not flow down because of this corruption.

#### V. LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

**Opinions on Local Governance:** Slightly more than eight in ten Azerbaijanis (81%) are aware that their municipality or village has a municipal council—more know this in rural areas (94%) than in urban areas (73%). However, a majority (57%) also say that they do not have enough information on the activities of their municipal council to satisfy their needs. Thirty-five percent say that they do have enough information to satisfy their needs. Twenty-eight percent report having contacted a member of their municipal council in the past to help resolve an issue or problem.

When respondents are asked who they would first approach to help solve a problem, their Executive Authority or the head of their municipal council, 38% say that they would first approach their Executive Authority. Twelve percent mention the head of their municipal councils, and 21% say that they would approach both equally. Nineteen percent say that they would approach neither body.

**Public Service Activities:** There has been a slight decline in the visibility of public service activities such as helping the poor and refugees. Thirty-five percent think these types of activities are very or somewhat common in Azerbaijan (compared to 43% in 2004), 12% that they are not very common (same as in 2004), while 33% think they are not common or do not happen at all in Azerbaijan (compared to 25% in 2004). For most types of public service activities mentioned to respondents, more people believe that the Azerbaijani government undertakes these activities than believe that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or both do so. The percentage of Azerbaijanis who say that NGOs play a role either exclusively or in addition to the government in at least one of the activities is 55% (59% in 2004). Twenty-five percent think that NGOs play this role exclusively, down from 30% in the 2004 survey.

**Awareness and Necessity of NGOs:** When asked whether members of their communities were aware of NGOs, 9% of those asked say that most members of their communities are aware of NGOs, 18% say that some members of their communities are aware of these organizations, 29% say very few are aware and 28% say that nobody in their community is aware of NGOs. Nearly three-quarters of those who know what NGOs are say that these types of organizations are essential or necessary for Azerbaijan, while 7% do not think they are necessary.

Few Azerbaijanis would definitely volunteer for NGOs without pay (13%). Thirty-two percent may volunteer, and 48% would definitely not volunteer. There is higher likelihood of volunteering for community institutions such as schools or clinics.

## VI. TRADITION AND WOMEN'S STATUS IN AZERBAIJAN

**Azeri Tradition:** Respondents identified Azeri tradition as being primarily typified by hospitality, respect for elders and the celebration of national heritage. When asked about the biggest differences in the traditional roles of men and women in Azeri society, many cite the fact that the man is head of the family (35%) and that women are responsible for taking care of the household (13%).

The majority of Azerbaijanis (61%) say that they always follow the general practices of Azeri tradition, 23% say that they sometimes follow the practices, while 14% say that they only follow the practices when convenient. A majority of Azerbaijanis also say that Azeri traditions are either very important (51%) or somewhat important (37%) in how they raise their children, or if they were to have children. Ten percent say that these traditions are not important in how they raise their children or in deciding to have children. Most Azerbaijanis feel that these traditions have a positive impact on women, with 39% saying the traditions have a very positive impact and 40% saying that they have a somewhat positive impact. Twelve percent say that Azeri traditions have a very or somewhat negative impact on women.

**Women's Status in Azerbaijan:** Sixty-seven percent of Azerbaijanis strongly or somewhat agree that women enjoy the same basic rights as men. Thirty percent strongly or somewhat disagree with this statement. In responding to another question, 72% said they agree that women and men in Azerbaijan are treated equally in all areas of life, and 24% said they disagree.

However, women are thought to have fewer opportunities than men in some key areas of life. Sixty-five percent of Azerbaijanis think that women have fewer opportunities than men in politics, while 52% believe this is the case for business. In contrast to politics and business, healthcare and education are areas in which women are felt to have disproportionately more opportunities than men. When respondents are asked whether it is good for Azerbaijani society that many women work, a majority (64%) think that this is good for society, 22% say it does not matter and 12% think this is bad for society.

**Women and Politics:** When respondents are asked how strongly they support or do not support women becoming involved in politics as candidates, a majority of men (55%) support women as candidates but a significant percentage (44%) oppose this. Among women, 70% support women as candidates and 29% do not support them. A bare majority (51%) of all respondents would encourage their daughters to run for office, while 45% would not encourage their daughters to do so. Among women, a majority (56%) would encourage their daughters but 39% would not. Among men, 44% would encourage their daughters and 42% would not.



## VI. INFORMATION AND MEDIA

**Information about Political and Economic Developments:** Since 2004, slightly more people say they have information about political and economic developments. The percentage who say they have a great deal or fair amount of information on economic developments has increased from 50% to 55%, and the percentage who say they have at least a fair amount of information on political developments has increased from 55% to 59%. Men are more likely to be informed about these affairs than women.

While a majority profess a general awareness of sociopolitical affairs, the majority also lack information satisfying their needs on specific matters. Forty-two percent of Azerbaijanis say they have enough information about the rights of citizens, and a similar percentage say that they have enough information about the activities of the national government. With regard to local institutions, 39% say that they have enough information about the powers of their local executive, while 35% know enough about the activities of their municipal councils.

**Frequently Used Media Sources:** Television is the primary source of information for Azerbaijanis. The most frequently used sources are TV Lider, TV Space and TV ANS, which are all used by more than 80% of the public. Az TV is used by nearly three-quarters. Radio ANS, Radio Space and Radio Lider are used by between 15% and 23% of the public. Print media is little used. The most often mentioned newspaper is *Yeni Musavat* (7%), and other print media that receive relatively frequent mentions are *Zerkalo* (6%), *Echo* (5%), *Azadlig*, *Azerbaijan* and *Okhu Meni* (each 4%).

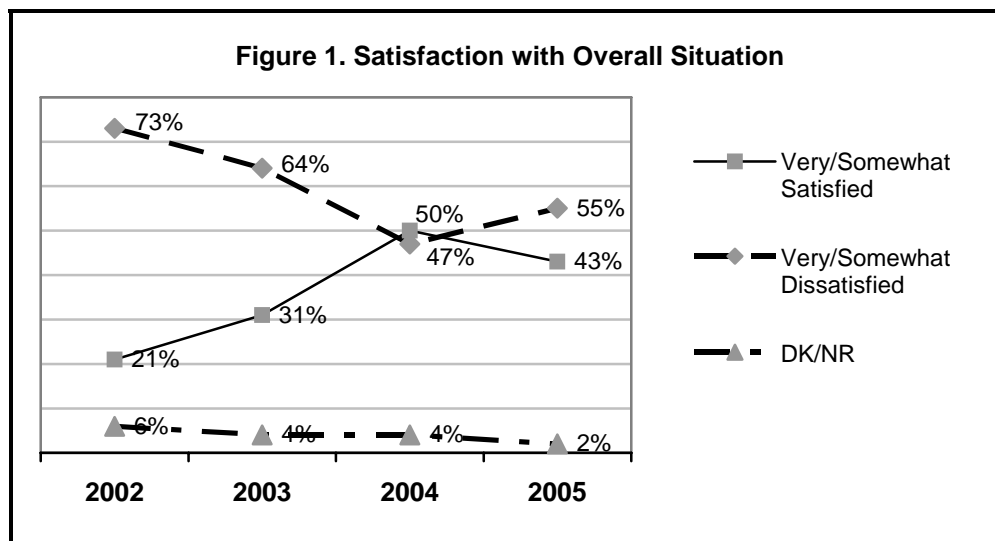
**Objectivity of Media:** There is a lack of perceived media objectivity as only 10% strongly agree that the media in Azerbaijan provides objective coverage of social and political developments in the country. A majority (56%) agree somewhat with this statement, while 28% strongly or somewhat disagree with the statement. In response to another question asking people to identify the proportion of the media in Azerbaijan that provides objective coverage, just 17% say that most of the media provides objective coverage, while 53% say that only some of the media provides objective coverage, 23% say very few of the media outlets provide coverage and 3% say that none do.

**Public TV:** Forty-two percent of Azerbaijanis are aware of a new channel, Public TV, while the majority of Azerbaijanis are not aware of it. Among those aware of Public TV, slightly more than a third (38%) believe that this channel will provide more objective coverage of developments in Azerbaijan than existing channels, while 27% believe that it will offer the same level of objectivity. Eleven percent of those aware of public television believe that this channel will be less objective.

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## I. THE SOCIOECONOMIC SITUATION

**Decline in Satisfaction with Overall Situation in the Country:** Satisfaction with the overall situation in Azerbaijan has declined, while dissatisfaction has increased since the 2004 IFES survey. A majority of Azerbaijanis (55%) say that they are either very or somewhat dissatisfied with the overall situation in Azerbaijan, compared with 43% who are satisfied (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup>



Residents of urban areas are more likely to be dissatisfied with the overall situation than residents of rural areas (60% versus 44%). Regionally, the highest level of dissatisfaction is among residents of Baku (67% dissatisfied). As has been the case with previous IFES surveys in Azerbaijan, the decline in satisfaction is driven primarily by negative perceptions of the economic situation in the country and in the respondent's household. Most of the participants in the focus groups cited economic concerns as a reason why the overall situation in Azerbaijan was bad. Karabakh and corruption were also mentioned:

*"I remember long time ago my parents got up early in the morning to be in time for work. Nowadays people get up in the morning but they have nothing to do – no work."*

*"The war continues, unemployment is high, corruption rampant, courts do not function properly."*

*"In the past, people worked all the year round and could afford to spend their holidays at some nice resort. Today, all people think of is how to earn a shirvan (AZM 10,000) for bread."*

*"Salaries and pensions are very low. If a pensioner has no relatives or is not fit to work, the pension will doom him or her to misery."*

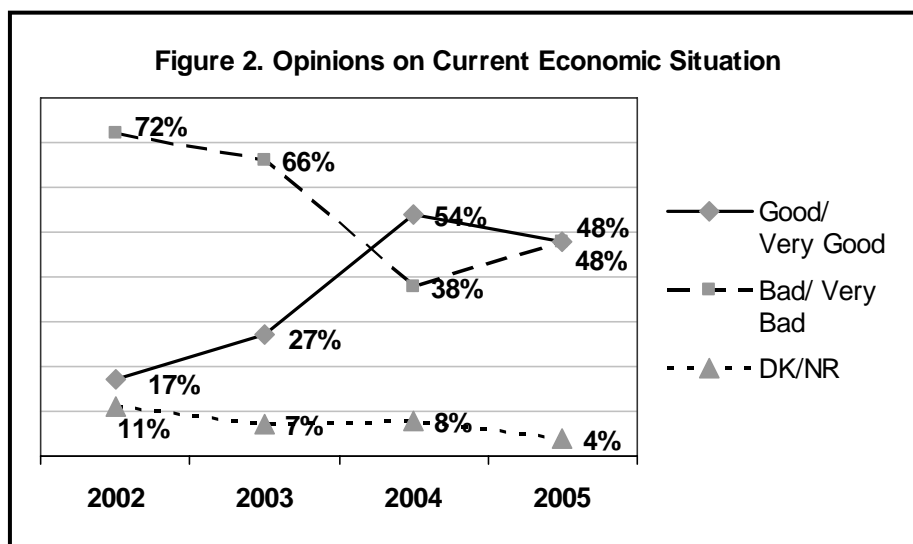
*"Our lands are occupied by Armenians. We have lost Karabakh. Corruption is flourishing. All these mean the situation is bad."*

*"The oil sector generates most of our country's income. The BP production volume is public knowledge, but nobody knows how much oil is produced by the SOCAR, which evokes doubts."*

**Increased Negative Perceptions of Current Economic Situation:** A greater percentage of Azerbaijanis are likely to have negative perceptions of the current national economic situation as compared with the 2004 survey. In 2004, a majority of Azerbaijanis (54%) felt that the economic situation in Azerbaijan was

<sup>1</sup> Question text: "Could you tell me if you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the overall situation in Azerbaijan today?" (n=2120)

very or somewhat good, and 38% felt it was very or somewhat bad. By contrast, 48% in this year's survey feel that the economic situation is good while an equal percentage feel that the economic situation is bad (Figure 2).<sup>2</sup>



Even though there has been a decline in positive perceptions of the economic situation in Azerbaijan since the 2004 survey, the percentage of Azerbaijanis describing the economic situation as good is significantly higher than in the 2002 and 2003 surveys. This suggests that some improvements have taken place in the economic situation in the country.

As stated earlier, opinions about the economic situation have a significant impact on assessments of the overall situation in the country. The vast majority of those who think the economic situation is bad are also dissatisfied with the overall situation in the country (83%), while on the other hand the vast majority of those who think the economic situation is good are satisfied with the overall situation in the country (72%).

Azerbaijanis are even more likely to give negative evaluations of their family's economic situation than they are of the national economic situation. In total, 58% describe their family's economic situation as very or somewhat bad, while 41% describe it as very or somewhat good. Thirteen percent of Azerbaijanis have more positive assessments of the national economic situation than of their family's economic situation, while 6% have better assessments of their family's economic situation.

In Guba-Khachmas, 79% describe their family's economic situation as bad. Highly negative assessments of the family economic situation are also provided in Absheron (70%) and Mugan-Salyan (69%). In general, urban residents are more likely to characterize their family's economic situation as being bad (60%) than are residents of rural areas (50%).

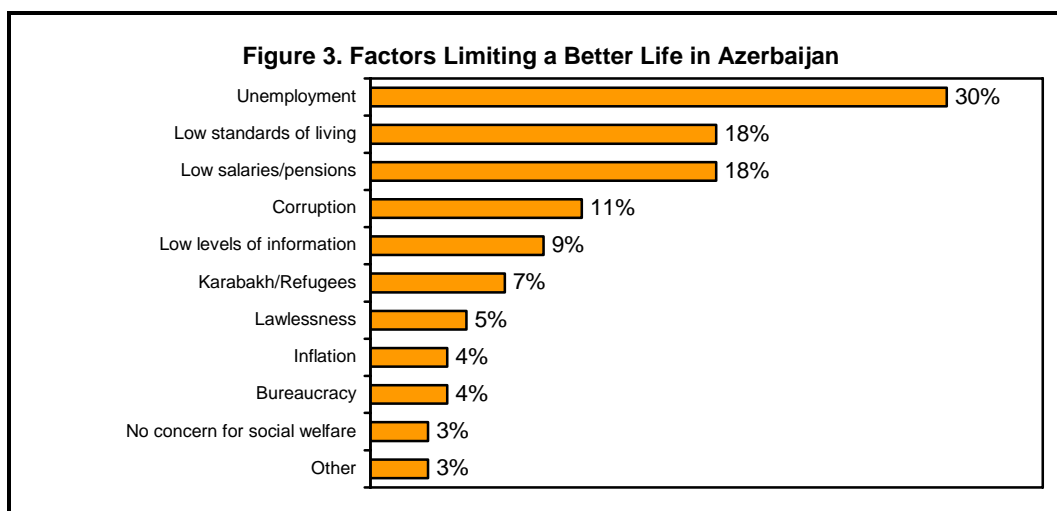
**Key Issues Facing Azerbaijan:** The strong relationship between the level of satisfaction with the overall situation in the country and perceptions of the economic situation points to the importance placed on economic concerns by most Azerbaijanis. This is further indicated by data from two different questions on the survey that ask Azerbaijanis for some of the key issues facing Azerbaijan and their family.

On the first question, respondents to the survey were asked to name the biggest issues facing Azerbaijan. Respondents could name any number of issues. The responses were:

<sup>2</sup> Question text: "How would you describe the current economic situation in Azerbaijan?" (n=1620)

- Karabakh (73%)
- Unemployment (36%)
- Low standard of living (19%)
- Corruption (9%)
- Improvement of social protections (7%)
- General economic problems (4%)
- Refugee problems (4%)
- Crime/Lawlessness (3%)
- Other (7%)

While Karabakh is the single most mentioned item (as in the previous IFES surveys), economic concerns such as unemployment, low standards of living and corruption are also mentioned by a large percentage of Azerbaijanis. The importance of economic concerns to Azerbaijanis' day-to-day existence is even more emphatically highlighted by responses to a question asking respondents to state the major factors that keep them and their family from enjoying a better life in Azerbaijan. Economic concerns are the predominant factors cited by Azerbaijanis (Figure 3).<sup>3</sup>



Unemployment, a low standard of living, low salaries and corruption are the most oft-cited factors keeping Azerbaijanis from enjoying a better life. It is interesting to note that Karabakh and the associated refugee problem is mentioned by only 7%, compared with 77% who mentioned economic issues as the biggest problems facing Azerbaijan. While Karabakh may be perceived as being an important issue for Azerbaijan as a nation, economic concerns are the focal issues for everyday life in Azerbaijan.

**Expectations for the Future Economy:** While many Azerbaijanis have negative perceptions of current economic conditions, they tend to be more optimistic about future economic conditions. A plurality of Azerbaijanis (48%) believe that the national economic situation will be better in one year's time. A little more than a quarter (26%) believe that economic conditions will stay the same, and 8% believe that they will get worse. Opinions on this question are not much different from the 2004 IFES survey (48% better, 28% same, 7% worse).

A plurality of Azerbaijanis also believe that their family's economic situation will be better in one year (39%). Twenty-nine percent believe that their family's economic situation in one year will be the same as now, and 12% believe that it will be worse. Overall, 36% of Azerbaijanis believe that both the national economic situation and their family's economic situation will be better in one year, while 7% think they both will be worse.

<sup>3</sup> Question text: "In your opinion, what are the major factors keeping you and your family from enjoying a better life in Azerbaijan?" (n=2120)

According to the focus group participants, economic growth is possible in Azerbaijan but participants mention that for this to occur, many changes need to take place in Azerbaijan in all aspects of the sociopolitical realm.

*We need personnel changes at all levels of the public administration system.*

*We will see no development until laws are enforced in Azerbaijan.*

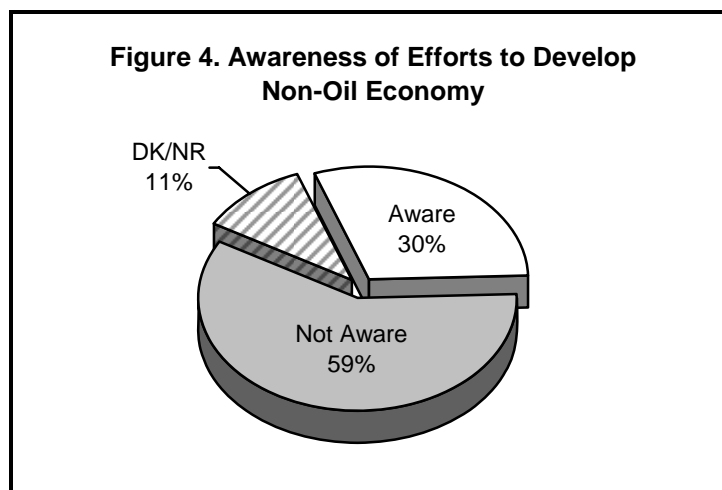
*We need to restore machine building industry and light industry. We have all necessary human and natural resources. We can efficiently use oil revenues.*

*We need to develop the agricultural sector. Within the USSR, Azerbaijan was among the most developed agricultural republics.*

*The level of education is very low. We shall set up private education institutions and invite specialists from far and near abroad on contract basis.*

*We need to activate the combat against corruption—this is where we shall start from.*

**Efforts to Develop the Non-Oil Economy:** As in the 2004 IFES survey, a majority of Azerbaijanis are not aware of government efforts to develop the non-oil economy (Figure 4)<sup>4</sup>.



Three in ten Azerbaijanis say that they are aware of efforts to develop the non-oil economy, a slight improvement on the 23% who were aware of these efforts in the 2004 IFES survey. Fifty-nine percent say they are not aware of any such efforts while 11% either don't know or do not respond to the question. Those who say they have heard of government efforts were asked to describe these efforts. Many mentioned the development of agriculture (30%), while others mentioned the opening of new workplaces (15%), the general development of business (14%) and the development of the construction industry (8%). Thirteen percent mentioned the development of various heavy and light industries.

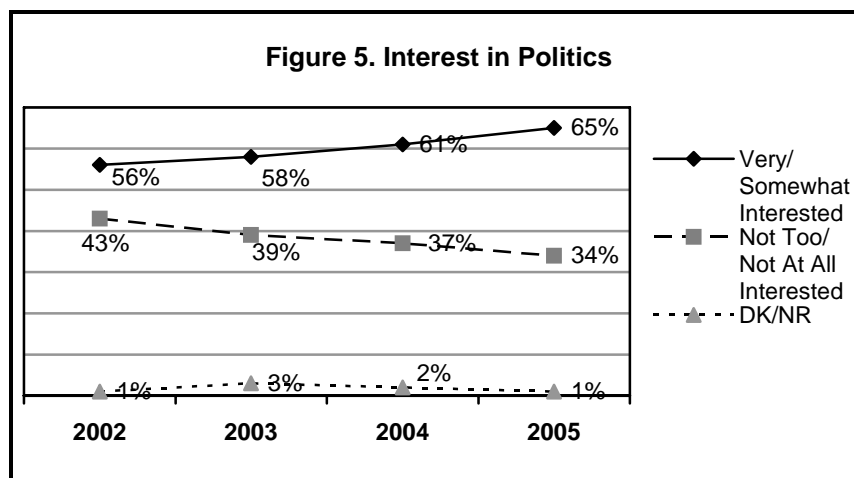
When asked what steps the government should take to develop the non-oil economy, the most oft-mentioned responses were the development of agriculture (18%), the development of industry (14%) and the opening of job-creation enterprises (10%).

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<sup>4</sup> Question text: "Have you heard or read about any efforts by the government to develop any sector of the economy beside the oil sector?" (n=2120)

## II. POLITICS AND ELECTIONS

**High Level of Interest in Politics:** The majority of Azerbaijanis say that they are very or somewhat interested in politics, and political interest has been increasing on a consistent basis since 2002 in IFES' surveys in Azerbaijan (Figure 5).<sup>5</sup>



Interest in politics is fairly well spread out across Azerbaijani society. A majority of both men and women say they are interested in politics although men are more likely to be interested than women (72% versus 58%). Interest in politics is relatively low among those 18-25 and 56+ (57% and 56% interested, respectively) as compared with those between ages 26-55 (67%).

Azerbaijanis with less than a secondary level of education are one of the few key groups in society in which a majority do not say they are interested in politics (41% interested). Among those with a secondary or post-secondary education, 67% are interested in politics.

For both those interested and not interested in politics, television is the primary medium by which they receive news about politics and government. Overall, 42% of Azerbaijanis say that they watch television every day for news and a further 30% watch it a few times a week. In contrast, only 2% of Azerbaijanis read newspapers every day for news on government and politics, and 9% read them a few times a week. Thus, 72% of Azerbaijanis are regular consumers of television news as compared with 11% who are regular consumers of newspapers. Among those interested in politics, 61% watch television news every day while 33% watch it a few times a week. Fewer people read newspapers, with 3% reading newspapers daily for news on politics and government, and 12% reading them a few times a week.

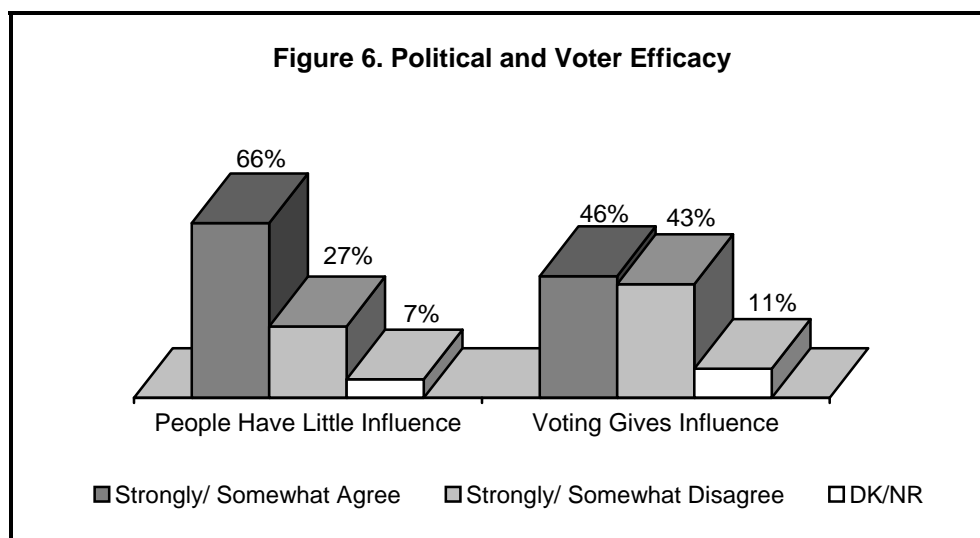
**Forms of Sociopolitical Participation:** In previous IFES surveys in Azerbaijan, the data has revealed that while the majority of Azerbaijanis take part in informal discussions about national and local development, most do not take part in sociopolitical activities that require a deeper level of commitment (signing petitions, working with others as part of a group to address key issues). This is still the case in the current survey, but it is interesting to note that there has been a slight increase in the percentage of Azerbaijanis who have signed a petition or worked as part of a group to address issues. In the 2004 survey, 7% reported signing a petition in the last year. This percentage is 12% in the current survey. In the 2004 survey, 32% said that they had worked with others in their communities to address important issues or concerns over the past year. This percentage is 43% in the current survey. Fourteen percent of

<sup>5</sup> Question text: "Please tell me how interested you are in affairs of politics and government?" (n=1620)

Azerbaijanis state that they have written letters to government authorities over a particular issue or concern.

Ninety-one percent of Azerbaijanis report that they have discussed local issues with their acquaintances over the past year, while 89% report this activity for national issues.

**Low Belief in Political and Voter Efficacy:** The survey contained two questions that aimed to gauge Azerbaijanis' belief that ordinary citizens can impact political developments in the country. The resultant data shows that while a plurality of Azerbaijanis may feel empowered by elections, very few Azerbaijanis think that they can exert influence on the way things are run in Azerbaijan (Figure 6).<sup>6</sup>



Two in three Azerbaijanis agree that people like them have little or no influence on the way things are run in Azerbaijan. A slight plurality (46%) agree that voting gives people like them influence on decision-making in Azerbaijan. Nearly a quarter agree that voting gives them influence but also agree that people like them have little or no influence on the way things are run in Azerbaijan. This data indicates that many Azerbaijanis think that, while the specific act of voting may give them some influence over decision-making, this influence cannot be generalized to the wider political environment in Azerbaijan.

Those interested in politics are more likely to say that voting gives influence (54%) than those who are not interested in politics (34%). But with respect to people having influence on the way things are run in Azerbaijan, a majority of both those who are interested and those who are not interested in politics agree that people like them have little or no influence on the way things are run in Azerbaijan.

**Voting in Previous Elections:** The survey data reveal that in the past Azerbaijanis have voted in high numbers only in presidential elections and have tended to stay away in large numbers from parliamentary and municipal elections. When asked whether they had voted in several recent elections in Azerbaijan, 73% of Azerbaijanis reply that they did vote in the 2003 presidential election, but far fewer report having voted in the 2000 parliamentary election (44%) and the 2002 referendum (38%). A majority of Azerbaijanis report having voted in the 2004 municipal elections (51%, Figure 7 next page).<sup>7</sup>

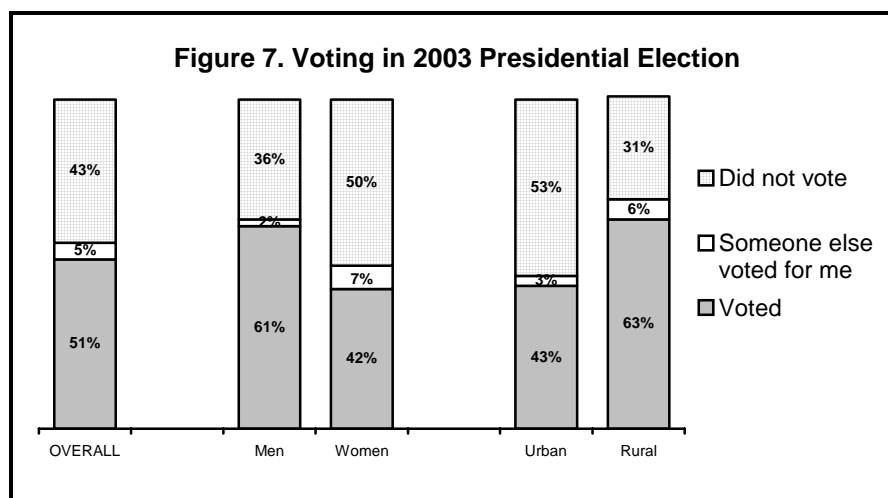
<sup>6</sup> Agree or disagree:

*"People like me have little or no influence on the way things are run in Azerbaijan."*

*"Voting gives people like me a chance to influence decision-making in Azerbaijan."*

<sup>7</sup> Question text: *"Now, let's talk about the 17 December 2004 elections for municipal councils. As you may know, sometimes people cast votes for other people in elections. Did someone cast your vote for you in the December 2004 municipal council elections? [If No] Did you vote in the 17 December municipal council elections?" (n=2120)*

Because of concerns about family voting or other irregular forms of proxy voting in Azerbaijan, respondents were asked whether someone else had voted for them. If they said that no one had voted for them, they were asked whether they had voted in the election. Five percent of Azerbaijanis said that someone else voted for them, women (7%) more than men (2%).



Men are generally more likely to have voted than women (61% versus 42%), and turnout is reported to be much higher in rural areas than in urban areas (63% versus 43%).

Voting in the municipal elections is more likely for those who report higher levels of interest in politics. Among those not at all interested in politics, 19% report having voted in the municipal elections. This compares with 38% among those not too interested in politics, 58% among those somewhat interested and 71% among those very interested in politics. Among those who disagree that voting gives them influence over decision-making, 37% report voting in the municipal elections. This compares with 65% who report voting among those who agree that voting gives them influence. This pattern of increasing voter turnout by interest in politics and belief in voter efficacy is evident as well for the 2000 parliamentary elections, 2002 referendum and 2003 presidential elections.

On a positive note, there was far fewer reports of voting list problems for the 2004 municipal elections than for the 2003 presidential elections. In IFES' 2004 survey in Azerbaijan, 77% of those who voted said that their names had been on the voting list when they voted. This percentage increased significantly for the 2004 municipal elections. In this year's survey, 96% of those who voted in the municipal elections say that their names were on the voting list when they went to vote.

**Low Level of Information About Elections:** A shortage of information about political developments continues to be an obstacle to greater voter participation in Azerbaijan. When respondents to the survey are asked whether they have enough information about political developments to make wise choices when voting, only 10% of Azerbaijanis say they have enough information to make wise choices. Forty-six percent say they have some information, 36% say they have very little and 7% they have no information to help them make a wise choice when voting. These percentages are relatively unchanged from the 2004 survey.

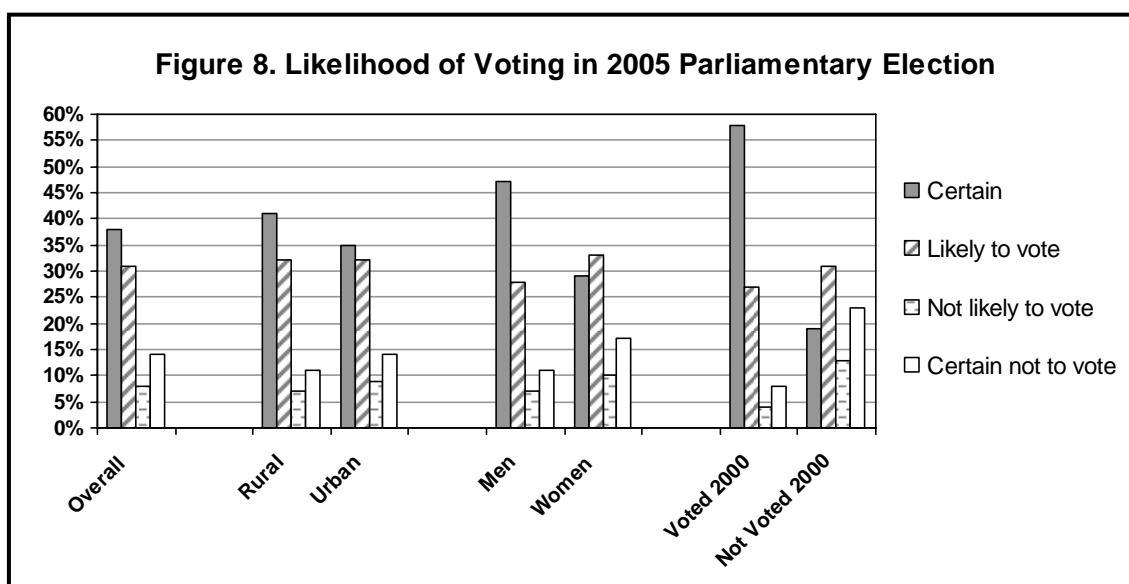
Information on political developments is a key indicator of voter turnout for elections. The greater the level of information a respondent professes, the more likely he or she is to have voted in the 2004 municipal council elections. Among those who say they have enough information to make a wise choice when voting, 74% say they voted in the municipal elections. Turnout was 61% for those with some information, 40% for those with little information and 22% with no information.



Many Azerbaijanis also report lacking much or any information about the election process. Forty-nine percent of Azerbaijanis say that they are either fully or somewhat informed about the election process in Azerbaijan, while an equal percentage say they do not have much or any information about the election process. In IFES' 2002 survey in Azerbaijan, respondents were asked for their level of knowledge about the voting process. While the 2002 question on the voting process and the 2005 question on election process are not exactly the same, they can be compared to provide an indication of whether the level of information about elections has improved. In the 2002 survey, 37% said they were fully or somewhat informed about the voting process, lower than the 49% who say they are informed about the election process in the 2005 survey.

**Likelihood of Voting in the 2005 Parliamentary Elections:** Based on data from the survey, turnout for the 2005 parliamentary election was expected to be higher than 50% in Azerbaijan. When asked how likely they are to vote in the parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan, a little more than a third (38%) say they are certain to vote, 31% are likely to vote, 8% are not likely to vote and 14% are certain not to vote. Nine percent don't know how likely they are to vote or do not answer the question.

According to the data, rural residents are more likely to vote in the parliamentary election than urban residents, and men are much more likely to vote than women (Figure 8).<sup>8</sup>

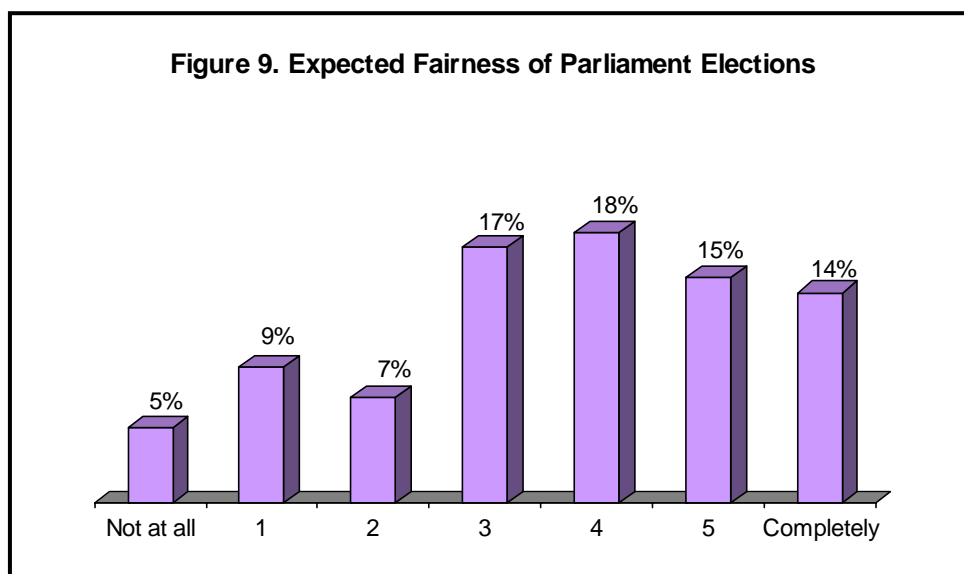


It is also interesting to note that voting in the 2000 parliamentary election has an impact on the likelihood of voting in the 2005 parliamentary election. Fifty-eight percent of those who voted in the 2000 election indicated that they were certain to vote in the 2005 parliamentary election, and another 27% are likely to vote. In contrast, only 18% of those who did not vote in the 2000 election are certain to vote in this year's election, and 31% are likely to vote.

When those who indicate that they are not likely to vote or are certain not to vote are asked why they are not likely to vote, more than a third say that the elections will not be honest (35%). Twelve percent do not believe their participation will make a difference, 11% say that the *Milli Majlis* does not work for the people and a similar percentage say that they have no wish to participate in the elections. Another 6% will not vote because they do not trust the *Milli Majlis*.

<sup>8</sup> Question text: "How likely are you to vote in the parliamentary elections that will take place later this year?" (n=2120)

**Most Do Not Expect Completely Fair Parliamentary Elections:** When survey respondents were asked to rate the expected fairness of the parliamentary elections on a scale of 0 to 6 (where 0 meant not fair at all and 6 meant completely fair), 14% say that the elections will be completely fair, 5% say they will not be fair at all and 17% take a neutral position



In the focus group discussions, most participants are hopeful that the elections will be fair, with the role of the international community highlighted as a motivating factor for keeping the elections fair.

*I believe that the pressure from the Council of Europe and other international organizations will render a positive impact on the outcome of the parliamentary elections.*

*There were deficiencies revealed at the last elections—at some polling stations the elections were found to be conducted with violations and the results annulled. However, members of these elections commissions remained the same.*

*A human being cannot live without hope. Every time we believe things will be better this time.*

*By all means, things will be better, at least a little. For example, Eldar Namazov was allowed to run for the parliament. I think elections will be a little more democratic this time to appease the international community.*

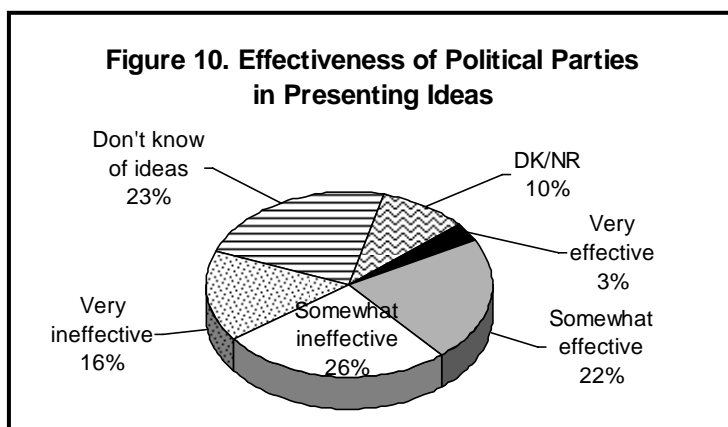
*International community is keen to see fair elections. We have a feeble hope that elections will be fair. We wait for international observers to come to Azerbaijan to monitor the course of the elections.*

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### III. POLITICAL PARTIES

**Most Cite Necessity of Political Parties But Do Not Believe They Are Effective:** As in previous surveys in Azerbaijan, the majority of Azerbaijanis believe that political parties are necessary for democracy in Azerbaijan. A quarter of Azerbaijanis (25%) think that political parties are essential for democracy in Azerbaijan, 35% think they are somewhat necessary and 26% think they are not very or not at all necessary. Those interested in politics, perhaps because of familiarity with political parties, are more likely to say that parties are necessary (70%) than those who are not interested in politics (42%). Those Azerbaijanis who believe that political parties are essential for democracy in Azerbaijan are much more likely to say that they are certain to vote in the parliamentary elections (53%) than those who think political parties are somewhat necessary (35%) or not very necessary (34%).

While a majority of Azerbaijanis generally believe that political parties are necessary for democracy in Azerbaijan, they do not necessarily think that parties are effective in presenting their ideas to the public. When respondents were asked how effective political parties in Azerbaijan are in presenting their ideas to the Azerbaijani public, only a minority deem them effective (Figure 10).<sup>9</sup>



Twenty-five percent of Azerbaijanis believe that political parties are either very or somewhat effective in presenting their ideas to the public. In contrast, 42% think that political parties are very or somewhat ineffective in presenting their ideas to the public. Surprisingly, given that this is an election year, the trend in political party effectiveness since the 2004 survey is negative. In 2004, 34% felt that political parties were ineffective in presenting their ideas, as compared with 42% in this year's survey. In addition, nearly a quarter of all Azerbaijanis say that they do not know of any ideas from political parties,

and another 10% reply "Don't know," which is an indication that these respondents have not heard any ideas from political parties.

Among those interested in politics, a constituency that should be favorable toward political parties, a plurality feel that political parties are ineffective (44% versus 33% effective). Among those certain to vote, 45% feel parties are ineffective (35% effective), while among those likely to vote, 44% think parties are ineffective and 24% believe they are effective.

When focus group participants were asked whether the parties' lack of communicating ideas was due to the fact that they lack ideas or whether they lack the means to communicate the ideas, most participants stressed parties' lack of means of communications, particularly television.

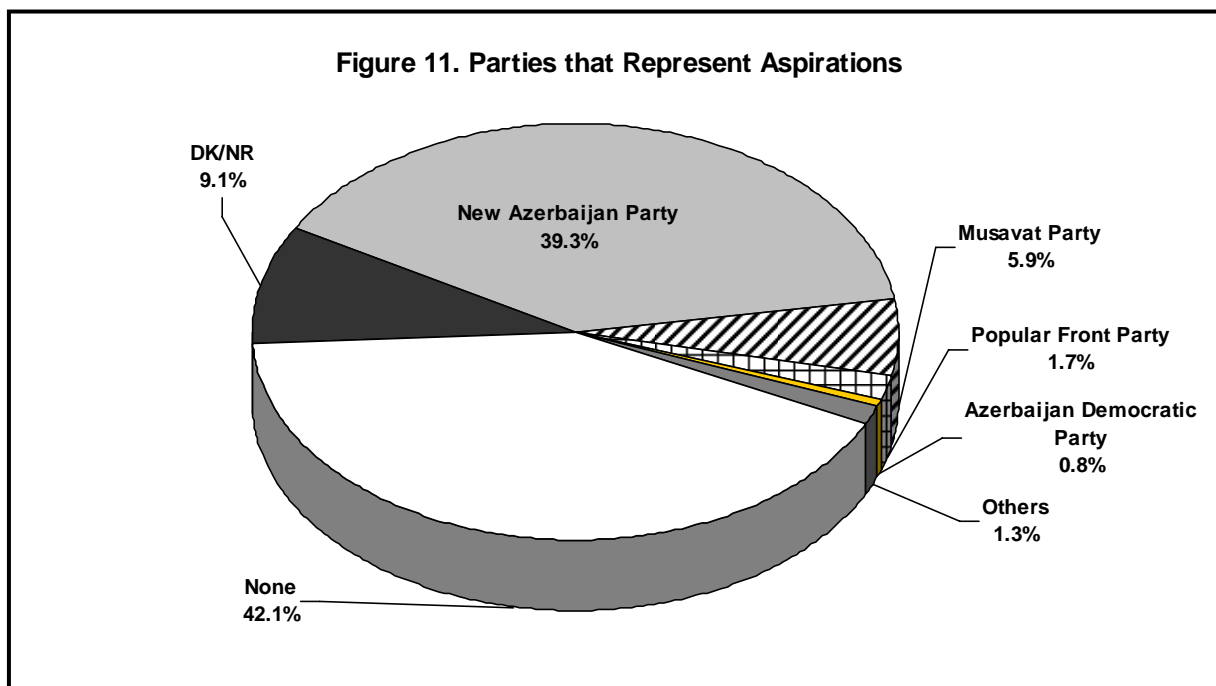
*They do not have access to television.*

*All television channels cover only Yeni Azerbaijan party and its activities.*

*The opposition does not have a TV station of its own. Eldar Namazov wanted to set up his television channel, everybody hoped he will manage it, but the idea failed. All television channels are pro-governmental, including the ANS.*

<sup>9</sup> Question text: "In general, how effective do you think political parties in Azerbaijan are in representing their ideas and principles to the Azerbaijani public?" (n=1620)

**YAP Represents Aspirations of Plurality of Azerbaijanis:** Survey respondents were asked to name a party that best represents the interests and aspirations of people like them. Similar to the results obtained in the 2004 survey, the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party (YAP) was the most often mentioned party, with opposition parties trailing far behind. It should be noted that the question asked respondents to name the party that represents their aspirations, *not* the party they would vote for in the parliamentary elections. It should also be noted that 'None' was the plurality response, reflecting the frustrations of many Azerbaijanis with the political choices available to them (Figure 11).<sup>10</sup>



Forty-two percent of Azerbaijanis say that none of the political parties represent their aspirations, the most common response to the question. The lack of a party that represents their aspirations is higher among those who think their family's economic situation is bad (50%) than among those who think their family's economic situation is good (33%). Those not interested in politics are also more likely to say that no party represents them (48%) than those interested in politics (38%). Sixty-eight percent of residents of Sheki and 57% of Mugan-Salyan say that none of the parties represent their aspirations.

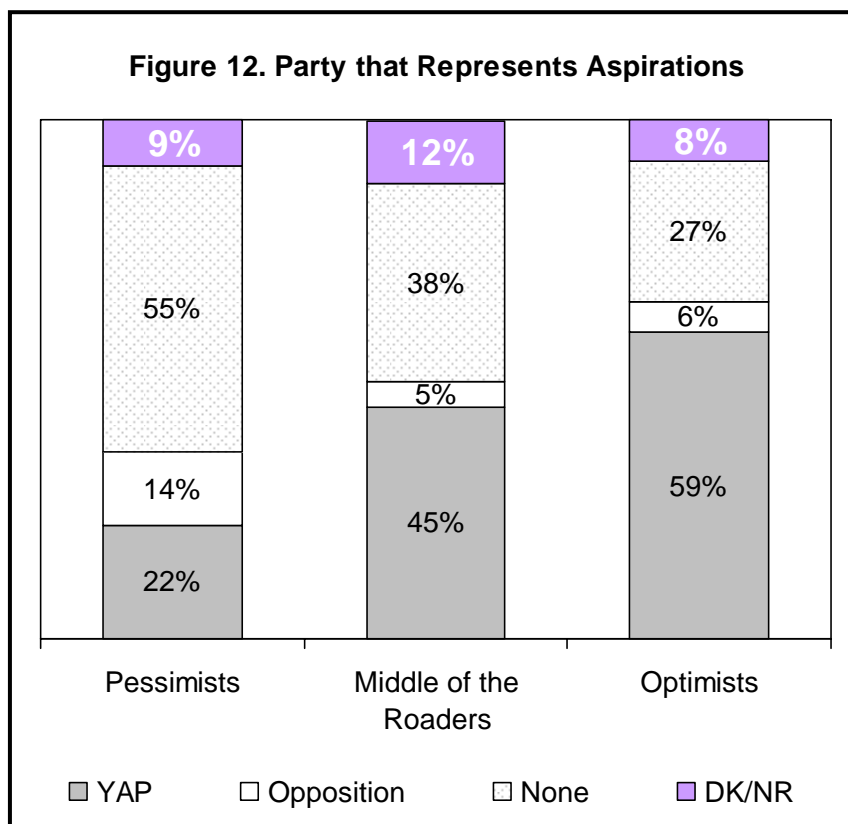
YAP is the most often mentioned party in all regions of the country. It is named disproportionately more often in Ganja (65%), Guba-Khachmas (63%) and Lenkoran (50%). It receives the least mention in Absheron (17%) and in Sheki (25%). Musavat receives its highest mentions in Absheron (11%) and Baku (9%).

Given the fact that a large proportion of the Azerbaijani population is dissatisfied with the overall and economic situation in the country, it is surprising that the opposition parties cannot project themselves as representing the aspirations of more people in Azerbaijan. Further analysis of the data shows that this is primarily because opposition parties have not been able to convince those dissatisfied with the state of affairs in the country that they represent their aspirations. Using responses on five questions that asked respondents about their opinions on the overall situation in the country, the current national and household situation, and future expectations for the national and household economic situation, three distinct groups can be identified in Azerbaijani society:

<sup>10</sup> Question text: "Can you tell me which political party best represents the aspiration of people like you?" (n=2120)

- Optimists (35%)
- Middle of the Roaders (19%)
- Pessimists (46%)

The Optimists are satisfied with the current overall and economic situation and are optimistic about the future. The Middle-of-the-Roaders are fairly satisfied with the current situation but are weary about the future. The Pessimists are dissatisfied with present conditions and pessimistic about the future. Generally speaking, one would expect the Optimists to favor YAP, the Pessimists to favor the opposition and the Middle-of-the-Roaders to split their loyalties. But Figure 12 shows that, while the Optimists act as expected, the Pessimists do not favor the opposition parties; rather the majority of this group believe that none of the parties represent their aspirations.

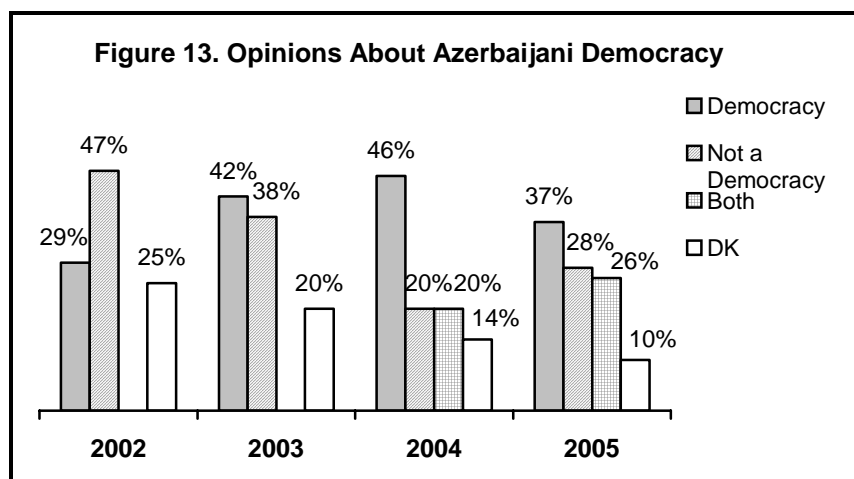


Among the Optimists, a majority (59%) name YAP as representing their interests, while this figure is only 22% among the Pessimists. However, a majority of the Pessimists (55%) say that none of the parties represent their aspirations, and only 14% name an opposition party. It should be no surprise that the Pessimists are least likely to think that parties are effective in communicating their ideas.

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## IV. DEMOCRACY, RULE OF LAW AND CORRUPTION

**Perceptions of Azerbaijani Democracy Decrease:** Previous IFES surveys in Azerbaijan have shown that opinions about democracy in Azerbaijan are related to a large extent to Azerbaijanis' opinions on the economic situation in the country. People who hold the opinion that Azerbaijan is a democracy tend to be the same people who believe the economic situation is good. Given the decrease in this year's survey (as compared with the 2004 survey) in respondents reporting positive opinions on the overall situation as well as economic situation in Azerbaijan, it is not surprising that there has also been a decrease in the percentage of Azerbaijanis who believe that their country is a democracy 2003 (Figure 13).<sup>11</sup>



The percentage of Azerbaijanis who say Azerbaijan is a democracy has declined from 46% in last year's survey to 37% in this year's survey. The percentage who say that Azerbaijan is not a democracy has increased from 20% to 26%, and the percentage who say it has elements of both a democracy and a non-democracy has increased from 20% to 28%. The impact of economic perceptions is made evident by the fact that, among those who think that the economic situation in the country is very or somewhat good, a majority (54%) think Azerbaijan is a democracy while 21% do not believe it is a democracy. In contrast, among those who think the economic situation in the country is very or somewhat bad, only 13% think Azerbaijan is a democracy while 42% do not think it is a democracy.

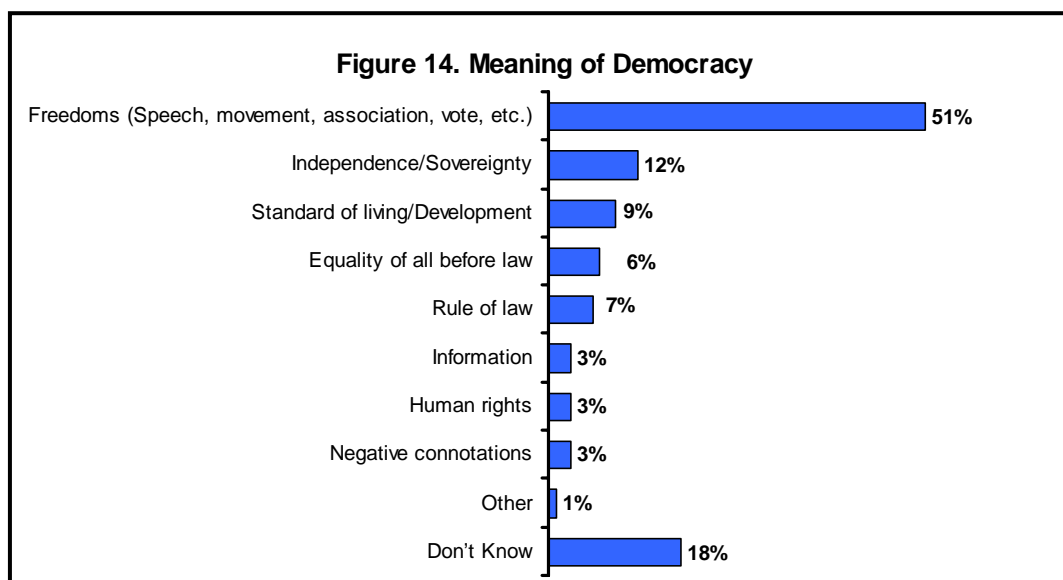
Residents of rural areas are more likely to think that Azerbaijan is a democracy (42%) than those in urban areas (30%). Residents of urban areas are more likely to say that Azerbaijan is not a democracy (38% versus 17%). Residents of Karabakh (67%) and Lenkoran (56%) are most likely to say that Azerbaijan is a democracy, while residents of Baku (52%) are most likely to say that Azerbaijan is not a democracy. There is little difference in opinions on Azerbaijani democracy by age.

Among those who do not say that Azerbaijan is not a democracy, 45% believe that Azerbaijan is becoming a democracy while 37% say that it is not becoming a democracy.

In the focus group discussions, many participants expressed the opinion that while there are elements of democracy in Azerbaijan, one could not call it a complete democracy. Many of these participants cited the fact that laws are bent to suit those in power and the lack of fair elections as evidence that Azerbaijan is not a full democracy. Some participants also refer to the bad economic situation as a reason why Azerbaijan is not a democracy, thus equating democracy with prosperity. This use of economic rationales to judge Azerbaijani democracy is a minority opinion, a fact highlighted by survey responses on what it means to live in a democracy.

<sup>11</sup> Question text: "Do you believe that Azerbaijan is primarily a democracy today or that it is not primarily a democracy?" (n=2120)

**Meaning of Democracy:** When asked what it means to live in a democracy, a majority of Azerbaijanis cite freedoms as signifying democracy (Figure 14).<sup>12</sup>



Azerbaijanis were most likely to cite freedom of speech and movement among the various freedoms mentioned in response to this question. In addition to freedoms, many Azerbaijanis say that Azerbaijan's independence and sovereignty signify democracy for them. Rule of law and equality of all before the law are also cited by a significant percentage as signifying a democracy. As mentioned above, not many Azerbaijanis cite economic rationales for the meaning of democracy as 9% cite the standard of living or economic development in a country. Those who mention the rule of law or equality of all before the law are likely to be very critical of democracy in Azerbaijan. Among those who cite these meanings of democracy as their first response, 41% do not believe that Azerbaijan is a democracy, 34% believe that Azerbaijan has elements of both a democracy and a non-democracy, and 22% believe that it is a democracy. In contrast, 42% of those who first cite freedoms think that Azerbaijan is a democracy, 28% think it is not, and 28% think it has elements of both.

The importance of freedoms is further emphasized in responses to another question on the survey. Respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with the following statement:

*"In order to establish order and discipline in society, it is necessary to limit the political and civic rights of the people."*

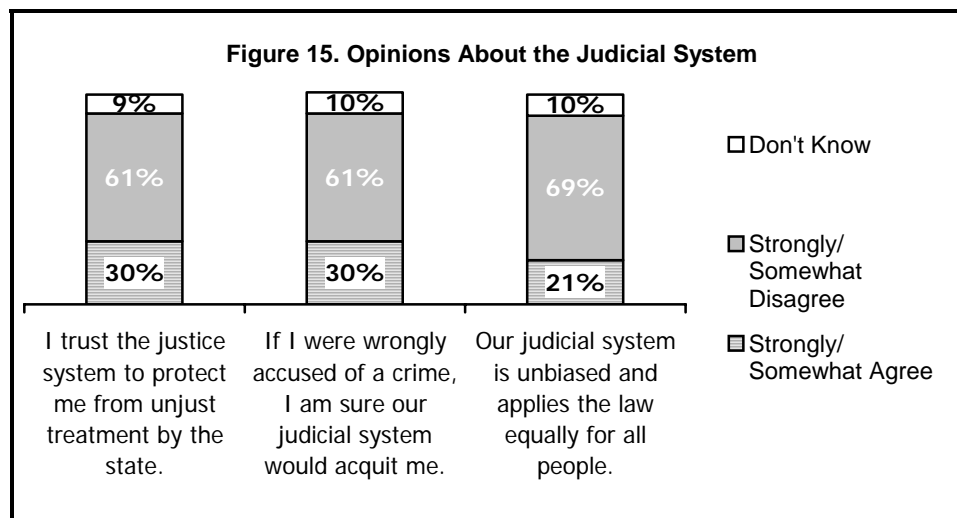
Forty percent completely disagree with this statement, and another 33% somewhat disagree with it. Only 17% completely or somewhat agree with the statement. The distribution of opinion on this question has not changed in IFES surveys in Azerbaijan since 2002 as close to three-quarters have disagreed with the statement in each of the surveys.

Opinions also have not changed significantly on Islam and democracy. Sixty-four percent of Azerbaijanis disagree with the argument that the basic tenets of Islam make it impossible for an Islamic country to be a democracy. Twenty percent agree.

<sup>12</sup> Question text: "What does it mean to you to live in a democracy?" (n=2120)

**Widespread Dissatisfaction with the Judicial System:** This report noted earlier that the rule of law was an important consideration for many Azerbaijanis in describing what it means to live in a democracy. It was also noted that those who emphasized legal aspects of democracy in their responses to the question on the meaning of democracy were more likely to be critical of Azerbaijani democracy than those who gave another response. The low level of trust expressed in the survey with regard to judicial institutions may be one reason why many of those who value the rule of law are not satisfied with democracy in Azerbaijan.

Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with three statements in order to assess their evaluations of the judicial system. The data show that a majority of Azerbaijanis are dissatisfied with the judicial system in Azerbaijan (Figure 15).<sup>13</sup>



More than six in ten Azerbaijanis disagree that the judicial system is unbiased (69%, 51% in 2004 survey), that it protects them from unjust treatment by the state (61%, 60% in 2004) or that, if they were wrongly accused of a crime, the judicial system would be sure to acquit them (61%, 47% in 2004). As the data indicate, in two out of the three cases there has been a significant increase in dissatisfaction since the 2004 survey. A majority of Azerbaijanis (54%) disagree with all three statements, a large increase from the 43% who disagreed with all three statements in the 2004 survey. Eighteen percent agree with all three statements.

**Increase in Perception of, and Experience with, Corruption in Azerbaijan:** In data covered in the earlier discussion of general and economic problems in Azerbaijan, corruption was identified by a significant percentage of Azerbaijanis as a key problem facing Azerbaijan as well as a factor limiting a better life in Azerbaijan. Responses to questions dealing directly with the issue of official corruption show that this concern is rooted in the pervasiveness of corruption in Azerbaijanis' day-to-day experience.

Survey respondents to both this survey, as well as the 2004 survey, were asked whether they had ever paid a bribe to a public official. If a respondent indicated that he or she had never paid a bribe, he or she was asked whether he or she was ever asked for a bribe. Combining the responses to these questions, and comparing with similar data from the 2004 survey data shows that not only have a majority of

<sup>13</sup> Question text: Agree/Disagree:

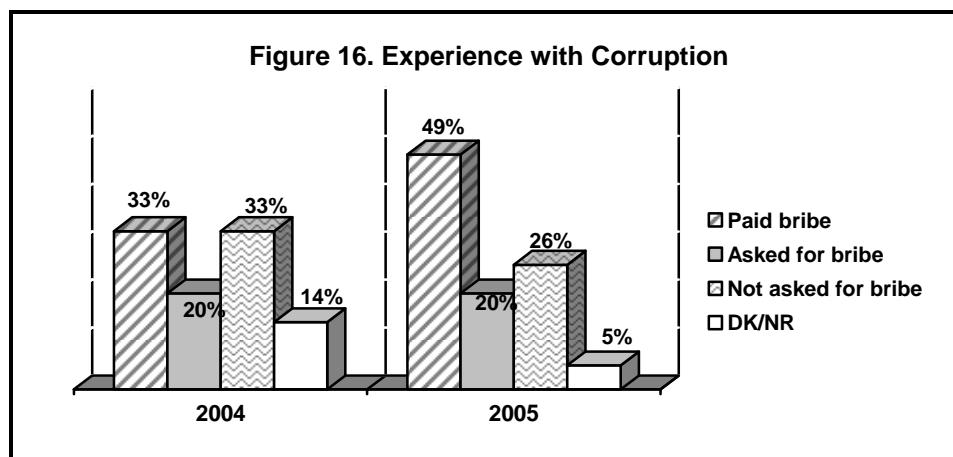
"I trust the justice system to protect me from unjust treatment by the state."

"If I were wrongly accused of a crime, I am sure our judicial system would acquit me."

"Our judicial system is unbiased and applies the law equally for all people." (n=1620)



Azerbaijanis paid or been asked for a bribe, but that the percentage of Azerbaijanis who have paid a bribe has increased substantially in the past year (Figure 16).<sup>14</sup>



Nearly half of all Azerbaijanis (49%) in the 2005 survey say that they have paid a bribe to a public official in the past, an increase from 33% in the 2004 survey. Another 20%, same as in 2004, say they have been asked for a bribe but not paid it. An important change in the pattern of responses on this question between the 2004 and 2005 surveys is the remarkable diminishment in urban-rural differences in paying bribes. In the 2004 survey, 43% of urban residents report having paid a bribe in the past as compared with 25% of rural residents, a difference of 18%. In this year's survey, 50% of urban residents report having paid a bribe in the past as compared with 46% of rural residents, a statistically insignificant difference of 4%. *This data indicate that the payment of bribes has become just as frequent in rural areas as in urban areas of the country.*

**Reasons for Paying Bribes:** When those who paid bribes were asked for the reasons they paid the bribes, many report doing so to obtain services that should normally be provided by government to its citizens. The following were the major reasons cited for paying bribes:

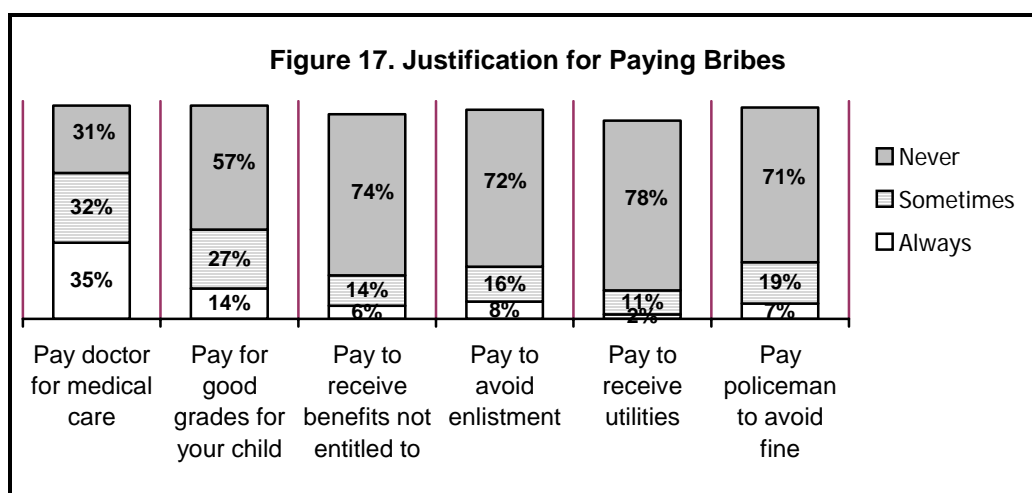
- For medical care (18%)
- For grades at school/university (12%)
- Obtain documents/passports (9%)
- To avoid a traffic fine (6%)
- To defer military service (4%)
- For pensions (3%)
- To obtain work (3%)
- Local officials/To obtain services (2%)

Given the increase in the reported payment of bribes since the 2004 survey, it should not be surprising that there has been an increase in paying bribes for specific services. Paying bribes for medical care has increased from 12% to 18%, and paying bribes for education has increased from 6% to 12%. It is also noteworthy that paying bribes to obtain official documents or passports has increased from less than 1% in the 2004 survey to 9% in this year's survey. In the past year, there has been an increased push on the part of the government to urge Azerbaijanis to replace old identity papers with newer versions of these papers. The survey data indicates that this initiative may have provided civil servants in Azerbaijan with another avenue through which to procure bribes.

<sup>14</sup> Question text: "Remembering this is a confidential survey and your responses will never be revealed, can you tell me if you have ever paid a bribe to a public official to obtain a service or avoid a fine?" (n=2120)  
"Have you ever been asked for a bribe by a public official?" (n=910)

Respondents who reported paying or being asked for bribes were asked to name the public agency that employed the official asking for the bribe. The responses reflect the reasons for paying bribes. Twenty-nine percent of those who have been asked for or paid bribes name public health institutions such as hospitals or clinics (29%), 18% name schools or universities, 16% name the Ministry of Internal Affairs or the passport department, and 5% name the Ministry of Defense or army. Other agencies named included social service agencies and public utilities.

**Justification for Paying Bribes:** The fact that Azerbaijanis have to pay for essential public services such as healthcare and education has made them more likely to accept the payment of bribes in these two areas than in other cases (Figure 17).<sup>15</sup>



A majority of Azerbaijanis believe it is sometimes or always justified to pay a bribe to a doctor for medical care, and more than 40% also believe that it is justified to pay for good grades for their children. For other situations where the person paying the bribe may receive something they do not deserve or where a person may pay to avoid a social obligation, more than 70% of Azerbaijanis in each case say that bribery in these cases is never justified.

**Perceived Frequency of Corruption in Azerbaijan:** Given the large number of Azerbaijanis who have direct experience with corruption, it is not surprising that more than eight in ten Azerbaijanis believe that corruption is very or somewhat common in Azerbaijan (83%). Eleven percent believe that corruption is very or somewhat rare in Azerbaijan. The opinion that corruption is very common in Azerbaijan is more frequent in large urban centers such as Baku (71%) than in medium-sized centers (between 5,000 and 20,000 people, 61%) or in smaller urban and rural centers (less than 5,000 people, 43%).

The prevalence of corruption in Azerbaijan was a subject of frequent discussion in the focus groups. Particularly with regard to economic development in Azerbaijan, most focus group participants were of the opinion that significant development is not possible in Azerbaijan until corruption is effectively countered. Skepticism among most focus group participants that the benefits of Azerbaijan's oil resources will flow down to ordinary people is also driven by the presence of pervasive corruption in the country, and the general feeling is that much of the oil revenues will not flow down because of corruption.

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<sup>15</sup> Question text: "I will read to you some actions that may be taken by people in Azerbaijan. Can you tell me if each of these actions are never justified, sometimes justified, or always justified?" (n=2120)

## V. LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

**Opinions About Municipal Councils:** Slightly more than eight in ten Azerbaijanis (81%) are aware that their municipality or village has a municipal council, and this figure is higher in rural areas (94%) than in urban areas (73%). These levels of awareness of municipal council are similar to awareness levels in IFES' 2004 survey in Azerbaijan. Also similar is the fact that residents of Baku are least likely to be aware that they have a municipal council (62%). In contrast, all respondents from Sheki and Kuba-Khachmas say that they are aware of their municipal council, whereas 99% of those in Shirvan and 98% of those in Lenkoran are aware of their municipal councils.

Even though most Azerbaijanis are aware of their municipal councils, a majority (57%) also say that they do not have enough information about the activities of their municipal council to satisfy their needs. In contrast, 35% say that they do have enough information to satisfy their needs. This is an improvement over the 2003 and 2004 surveys, where 28% said they had enough information on municipal councils. Among those who say that they are aware of their municipal councils, 51% say they do not have enough information while 42% say that they do have enough information to satisfy their needs.

Another area in which there has not been much of a change from the 2004 survey is the rate of contact with members of municipal councils. Overall, 28% of Azerbaijanis report having contacted a member of their council in the past to help resolve a problem. This is the same percentage as in the 2004 survey, and higher than the 15% who reported contact in 2003. Given that residents of rural areas are more likely to be aware of their councils, it is not surprising that they have a higher rate of contact with members of the councils than those in urban areas (43% versus 16%).

Those who have not contacted members of their municipal council were asked why they had not done so. Forty-two percent of these respondents have not had a need to contact members of their councils. But some have not contacted members of their council because they do not value the contact. Fifteen percent each say that they have not contacted council members because they think it would be useless or because they do not trust the municipal council. This is a fairly consistent response as well in previous IFES surveys in Azerbaijan, and it highlights the difficulties municipal councils face in gaining influence in local affairs, especially when compared with the centrally appointed Executive Authority.

**Executive Authority is Preferred for Contact:** Municipal councils were introduced in Azerbaijan in 1999 in order to foster decentralization in the governing structures in the country. However, municipal councils have not had clearly delineated responsibilities that set them apart from the Executive Authority appointed by the central government, nor the resources to carry out those responsibilities accorded to them. Thus, more Azerbaijanis still see the Executive Authority in their region as the body to approach if they need help addressing an issue, a fact repeatedly highlighted in IFES' surveys in Azerbaijan.

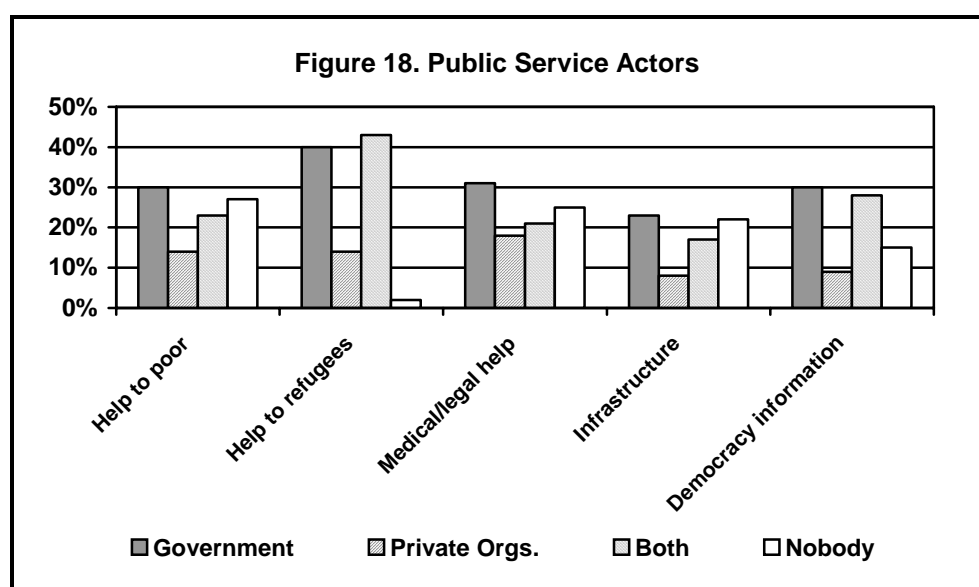
When Azerbaijanis are asked who they would first approach for help solving a problem, their Executive Authority or the head of their municipal council, 38% say that they would first approach their Executive Authority. Twelve percent mention the head of their municipal councils, and 21% say that they would approach both equally. Nineteen percent say that they would approach neither body. These percentages are not significantly different from previous IFES surveys.

Those Azerbaijanis who have had previous contact with their municipal council are more likely to say that they would contact the head of the council or both than those who have not had previous contact with the municipal council. Among those who have had contact, 27% say they would first contact their Executive Authority, 24% the head of their council and 40% say they would contact both. Among those who have not had contact with their municipal council (but are aware of it), 43% say they would contact the Executive Authority, 9% the head of their municipal council, and 16% both.

Rural residents are much more likely to say that they would contact the head of their municipal council than urban residents (20% versus 6%).

**Responsibility for Public Service Activities:** This year's survey sees a slight decrease in the visibility of both the public service activities likely to be carried out by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the NGOs themselves. Survey respondents were asked to assess the frequency of public service and charitable activities, such as helping the poor and refugees, offering legal and medical help, etc. In total, 35% think these types of activities are very or somewhat common in Azerbaijan (compared with 43% in 2004), 12% think they are not very common (same as in 2004), while 33% think they are not common or do not happen at all in Azerbaijan (compared with 25% in 2004). As in previous surveys, urban residents are more likely to think that these types of activities are very or somewhat common than rural residents, but in both cases, the percentage that think these activities are common has decreased from the 2004 survey. In the case of urban residents, this decrease has been from 46% to 38%, and in the case of rural residents, it has been from 39% to 30%.

Those who thought that these activities are at least not very common were next asked whether they think that the government, private organizations or both undertake these types of activities in Azerbaijan (Figure 18).<sup>16</sup>



Slightly more respondents than in previous surveys think that the government exclusively undertakes these activities, but there are a significant number who think that private organizations also undertake these activities, either exclusively or along with the government. The percentage of Azerbaijanis that say that NGOs play a role either exclusively or in addition to the government in at least one of the activities is 55% (59% in 2004). Twenty-five percent think that NGOs play this role exclusively, down from 30% in the 2004 survey.

**Awareness and Necessity of NGOs:** Respondents who think that public service activities exist in Azerbaijan were informed that the private organizations that carry out these activities are usually called NGOs. They were then asked whether members of their communities are aware of these NGOs. Nine percent of those asked say that most members of their communities are aware of NGOs, 18% say that some members of their communities are aware of these organizations, 29% say very few are aware and 28% say that nobody in their community is aware of NGOs. These responses are not significantly different from responses in the 2004 survey.

<sup>16</sup> Question text: "And for each of the following types of activities, what organization do you think undertakes the activity: the government, private organizations, or both?" (n=1498)

As in last year's survey, the vast majority of those persons displaced as a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict say that at least some in their community are aware of NGOs (78%). Awareness of NGOs is much lower in urban (23%) or rural areas (20%) in which displaced persons are not concentrated.

The most well-known NGOs are the Red Cross (8%) and Nijat (5%). No more than 1.7% can name any other NGO, a decrease in NGO recognition from the 2004 survey.

Those who think that private organizations carry out public service activities were also asked whether these types of organizations (NGOs) are necessary in Azerbaijan. Among these respondents, nearly three-quarters (74%) think that NGOs are essential or necessary for Azerbaijan, while 7% think they are not very or at all necessary. These responses are not much different from the 2004 survey.

**Volunteerism:** Few Azerbaijanis are willing to work for NGOs without pay—i.e., to volunteer. Overall, 13% of those aware of public service activities say that they would definitely volunteer for an NGO, 32% say they may volunteer and 48% say they would not volunteer for NGOs. Azerbaijanis are slightly more likely to volunteer for a public institution in their neighborhood. In this case, 21% say they would definitely volunteer, 32% say they may volunteer and 44% say would not volunteer.

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## VI. TRADITION AND WOMEN'S STATUS IN AZERBAIJAN

**Azerbaijani Tradition:** The survey contained several questions on Azeri traditions and the relationship of these traditions to women's status in Azerbaijan. Respondents to the survey were asked to name the things that they think characterize Azeri tradition. The most oft-mentioned responses were:

- Hospitality (30%)
- Respect for elders (30%)
- Celebration of national heritage/holidays (21%)
- Religion/Islam (5%)
- Respect for women (4%)
- Attachment to family (3%)
- Nationality (3%)
- Patriotism (3%)

Hospitality, respect for elders and celebration of the national heritage are considered important hallmarks of Azeri tradition.

When asked about the biggest differences in the traditional roles of men and women in Azeri society, many cite the fact that the man is head of the family (35%) and that women are responsible for taking care of the household (13%). Eleven percent say that men and women have equal rights under Azeri tradition, but 6% say that women have limited rights and another 2% say that women must submit to men in their household. Another 4% suggest that men and women in Azerbaijan each have their own places.

When respondents are asked whether they would like to change anything about Azeri traditions, the majority (54%) say they would not change anything and another 22% do not give a response. Six percent say that women should have more rights and independence, and 4% would like to address expensive ceremonies and weddings in Azerbaijan.

**Following Azeri Tradition:** The survey data indicates that tradition plays an important role in the lives of a majority of Azerbaijanis. The majority (61%) say that they always follow the general practices of Azeri tradition, 23% say that they sometimes follow the practices, while 14% say that they only follow the practices when convenient. There is little gender difference on this question. A majority of Azerbaijanis also say that Azeri traditions are either very important (51%) or somewhat important (37%) in how they raise their children or in deciding whether to have children. Ten percent say that these traditions are not important in how they raise their children or in deciding whether to have children. Urban residents are slightly more likely to say that Azeri traditions do not play an important role in how they raise their children (12% versus 6%).

Another question on the survey asked respondents to rate the impact that Azeri traditions have on women in Azerbaijan. Most Azerbaijanis feel that these traditions have a positive impact on women, with 39% saying the traditions have a very positive impact and 40% saying that they have a somewhat positive impact. Twelve percent say that Azeri traditions have a very or somewhat negative impact on women. Women are more likely to say that Azeri traditions have a negative impact than men (16% versus 8%), but a majority still say that they have a positive impact (75%).

**Women's Status in Azerbaijan:** Responses to the question about Azeri traditions and their impact on women indicate that the vast majority of Azerbaijanis do not think that Azeri traditions impinge on women in Azerbaijan. This opinion is reinforced by responses to other questions on the survey. Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the following two statements:

*"Women in Azerbaijan enjoy the same basic rights as men."*

*"Women in Azerbaijan are treated equally as men in all areas of life."*

In both cases, the vast majority of Azerbaijanis have positive assessments of women's status in Azerbaijan. Sixty-seven percent of Azerbaijanis strongly or somewhat agree that women enjoy the same basic rights as men. Thirty percent strongly or somewhat disagree with this statement. On the second statement, 72% agree and 24% disagree that women and men in Azerbaijan are treated equally in all areas of life.

While there is little difference in the opinions of men and women on the second statement, there is a significant difference on the first statement. Seventy-one percent of men agree that women enjoy the same basic rights as men, while 63% of women agree. Women are more likely to disagree with the statement than men (33% versus 26%). One group that is particularly likely to disagree is women who are 18-25 years of age. Forty-one percent of respondents in this group disagree with the statement. Most participants in the focus group believe that generally women enjoy the same rights as men in Azerbaijan, but when asked whether women may have less opportunity than men, many women in the focus groups stated that women are likely to have less opportunities than men in various areas of life, with particular emphasis on occupational differences and the fact that women are expected to be homemakers while men take little responsibility in household affairs.

Respondents to the survey were also asked to assess whether women have greater, the same or lesser opportunities in several areas of life. The responses suggest that women are felt to have fewer opportunities in areas that afford an opportunity for greater influence in society (Figure 19).<sup>17</sup>

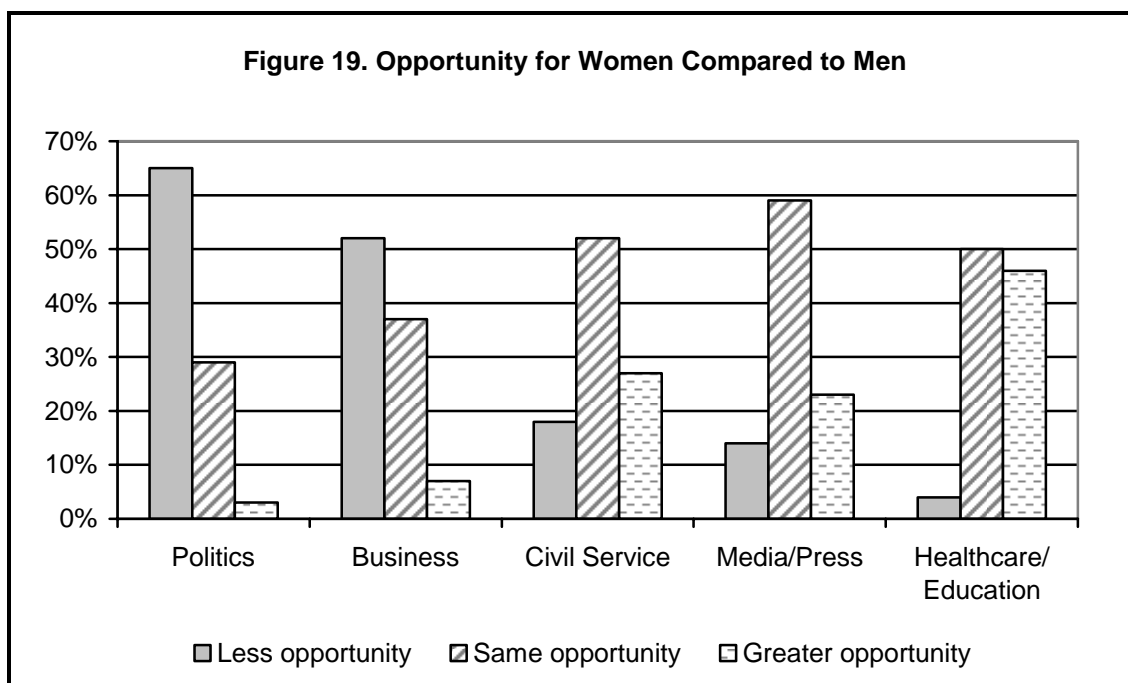


Figure 19 indicates that the two areas that allow an individual to wield significant influence in society, politics and business, are also the two areas where women are felt to have the least amount of opportunity as compared with men in Azerbaijan. Sixty-five percent of Azerbaijanis think that women have less opportunity than men in politics, while 52% believe this is the case for business. There is little difference between men and women on this question.

<sup>17</sup> Question text: "Listed below are some areas of life in Azerbaijan. In your opinion, for each of these areas, do women have the less opportunity than men, greater opportunity than men, or the same level of opportunity as men?" (n=2120)

In contrast to politics and business, areas that afford little influence—healthcare and education—are areas in which women are felt to have disproportionately more opportunities than men. In addition, some women in the focus groups point out that this only means that women are seen to be ideal teachers and nurses. Administrators in the institutions that employ a disproportionate number of women still tend to be men.

When respondents are asked whether it is good for Azerbaijani society that many women work, a majority (64%) think that this is good for society, 22% say it does not matter and 12% think this is bad for society. There is a significant difference between men and women. While 54% of men believe working women are good for society, this figure is 74% among women. Given the fact that many women in urban areas work, it is somewhat surprising that the difference between men and women on this issues is similar in both urban and rural areas, including Baku.

**Women and Politics:** There is also a significant difference between men and women in opinions toward women's involvement in politics. When respondents are asked how strongly they support or do not support women becoming involved in politics as candidates, men are more likely to oppose this than women. Among men, a majority (55%) support women as candidates but a significant percentage (44%) oppose this. Among women, 70% support women as candidates, and 29% do not support.

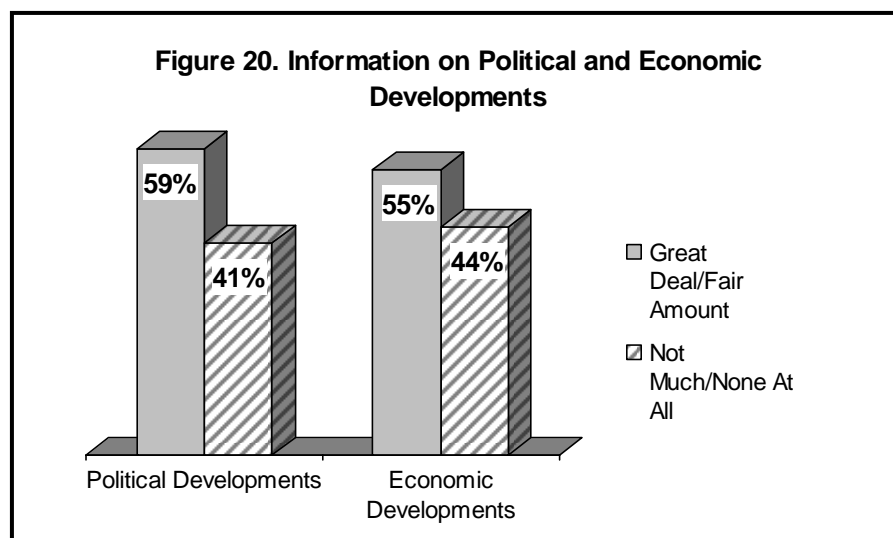
There is greater opposition, even among women, to encouraging their daughters (if they have one, or supposing they have one) to run for office. Overall, a bare majority (51%) would encourage their daughters to run for office, while 45% would not encourage their daughters to run for office. Among women, a majority (56%) would encourage their daughters but 39% would not. Among men, 44% would encourage their daughters, and 42% would not. In the focus groups, most participants said that they would encourage their daughters if that was their desire, but their preference would be that their daughters not become involved in politics. The primary reason for this was the lack of a positive image enjoyed by politicians in Azerbaijan.

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## VII. INFORMATION AND THE MEDIA

**Information About Political and Economic Developments:** There has been a slight increase in information on both political and economic developments in Azerbaijan since the 2004 survey. A solid majority of Azerbaijanis say that they have a great deal or fair amount of information on both these types of developments in Azerbaijan (Figure 20).<sup>18</sup>



The percentage that say they have a great deal or fair amount of information on economic developments has increased from 50% to 55%, and the percentage that say they have at least a fair amount of information on political developments has increased from 55% to 59%. As in previous surveys, there are many sub-group differences in the level of information. Men are more likely to be informed about political and economic developments than women (68% versus 51% for politics and 64% versus 46% for economics). The youngest (18-25) and oldest (56+) age groups are the least informed, with 51% and 50%, respectively, informed about economic developments, and 44% each informed about economic developments.

There has been a substantial change in the level of information among urban and rural residents of the country. In previous IFES surveys in Azerbaijan, urban residents always expressed a significantly higher level of information about political and economic developments than rural residents. In this year's survey, this difference is not present. With respect to information about political developments, 61% of rural residents say they have a great deal or fair amount of information as compared with 58% of urban residents. With respect to economic developments, 55% in each group say they have a great deal or fair amount of information. Comparison with data from the 2004 survey shows that this is primarily due to the increased levels of reported information by rural residents. In the 2004 survey, 52% of rural residents indicated they had at least a fair amount of information on political developments, as compared with 61% in this year's survey. Similarly, in 2004 46% of rural residents were informed about economic developments, as compared with 55% in this year's survey. Perhaps news regarding the approaching parliamentary elections as well as the formation of opposition party blocs has led to an increase in information levels among rural residents.

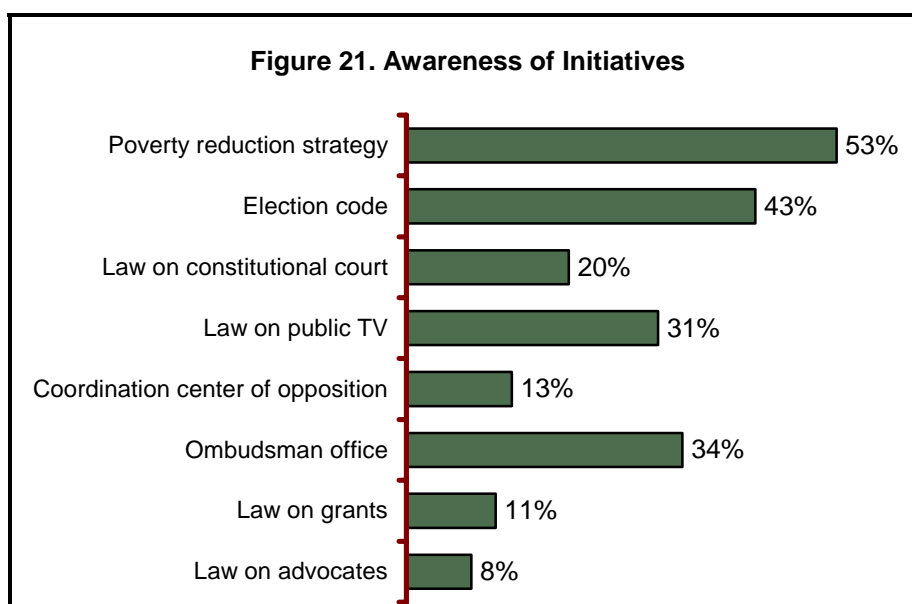
**Continued Lack of Information About Institutions and Initiatives:** Similar to previous surveys, the majority of Azerbaijanis continue to profess a lack of enough information to satisfy their needs on many sociopolitical issues and activities. Forty-two percent of Azerbaijanis say that they have enough

<sup>18</sup> Question text: "To begin, could you tell me how much information you have about political developments in Azerbaijan?" (n=2120)  
"And how much information do you have about economic developments in Azerbaijan?" (n=2120)

information about the rights of citizens, and a similar percentage say they have enough information about the activities of the national government. With regard to local institutions, 39% say they have enough information about the powers of their local executive, and 35% say they know enough about the activities of their municipal councils. Respondents who professed to have information about political developments answered the question about the adequacy of their knowledge about governmental activities quite differently than those not informed of political developments. With the exception of the activities of their municipal councils, a majority of those with at least a fair amount of information on political developments are likely to say that they have enough information to satisfy their needs on these matters, whereas the vast majority of those not informed of political developments say they do not have enough information to satisfy their needs.

One sociopolitical matter on which neither those politically informed nor uninformed have much information is the judicial system. Just 18% of Azerbaijanis say that they have enough information about the judicial system to satisfy their needs.

Respondents in each of the IFES surveys in Azerbaijan have been asked whether they had heard of several important political initiatives. In only one case, the poverty reduction strategy, are a majority aware of the initiative (Figure 21).<sup>19</sup>

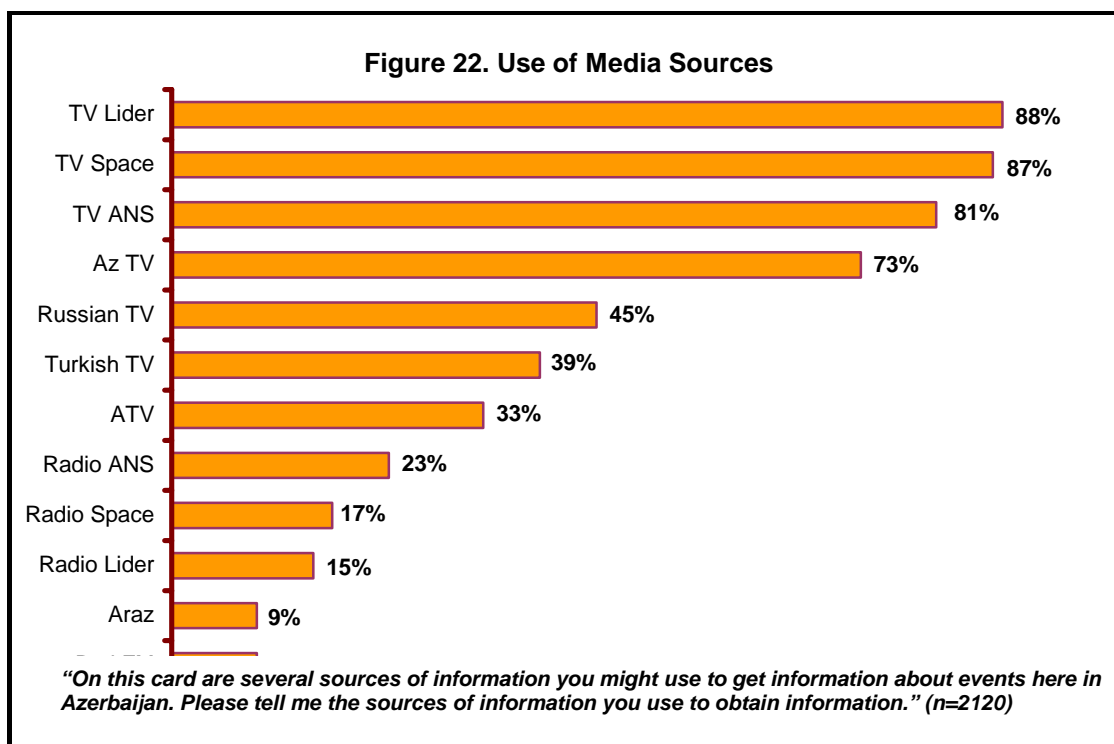


The percentage of Azerbaijanis aware of the poverty reduction strategy has increased from 46% in 2004 to 53% in this year's survey. Awareness of the Ombudsman's office has more than doubled over the past two years from 13% in 2003, 22% in 2004 and 34% in this year's survey. Awareness of the law on public TV has also increased since the 2004 survey.

**Frequently Used Media Sources:** In the analysis for the 2004 survey in Azerbaijan, it was noted that the lack of information about many issues was not necessarily the result of a lack of available channels for information in Azerbaijan. In the 2004 survey, more than three-quarters of Azerbaijanis reported using four or more specific media outlets for information about government and politics. There is a similar finding in this year's survey as 89% of Azerbaijanis report using more four or more specific media outlets for information. Rather, the focus group findings indicate that many Azerbaijanis would like better quality information from these media outlets.

<sup>19</sup> Question text: "Have you heard of the following issues or activities?" (n=2120)

As in 2004, focus group participants indicated that while they use many different TV, radio and newspaper sources for information, there are very few that they find to be objective in presenting developments in Azerbaijan. The total or near total control of the prominent TV channels by the state was also felt to be an inhibiting factor in the quality and breadth of information available to Azerbaijanis. Among the various television channels in Azerbaijan, only ANS was mentioned by many focus group participants as approaching objectivity when presenting information on sociopolitical matters. Given the fact that television is the major information source for most Azerbaijanis (Figure 22), the state control of many of the channels continues to be a major concern in the media environment in the country.



The prevalence of television channels as the major source of information is one conclusion suggested by the data in the figure above. The other conclusion is that the media outlet most favored by opposition groups in spreading their message, newspapers, is used with little frequency by Azerbaijanis. The most often mentioned newspaper is *Yeni Musavat* (7%), and other print media that receive relatively frequent mentions are *Zerkalo* (6%), *Echo* (5%), *Azadlig Azerbaijan* and *Okhu Meni* (each 4%). *Azerbaijan Muallami* and *Khalg* are also mentioned by 3% of respondents.

Residents of urban areas are more likely to watch *television channels such as Lider, Space, ANS, and ATV* than those in rural areas, where people are most likely to watch *Az TV*. Use of print media is significantly higher in urban areas.

**Objectivity of Media in Azerbaijan:** In the focus group discussions, participants were nearly unanimous in thinking that the media in Azerbaijan is far from objective. Participants thought that most television channels, with the exception of ANS, were censored by the state in reporting news and that the newspapers often reflected the point of a view of the political party or group publishing the paper (or magazine). Many participants mentioned that, when it comes to information about sociopolitical matters in Azerbaijan, they consult many different sources of information and then make up their minds about what might be the actual facts. This lack of perceived objectivity in the media is also reflected in the survey findings as only 10% strongly agree that the media in Azerbaijan provides objective coverage of social and political developments in the country. A majority (56%) agree somewhat with this statement, while 28% strongly or somewhat disagree with the statement.

On another question that asked respondents to identify the proportion of the media in Azerbaijan that provides objective coverage, just 17% say that most of the media provides objective coverage, while 53% say that only some of the media provides objective coverage, 23% say very few media outlets provide objective coverage and 3% say that none do. When asked whether they are more likely to trust broadcast or print media to provide objective coverage, most Azerbaijanis name the outlet they are more likely to use, the broadcast media (77%). Just 3% trust print media more than broadcast media. Nine percent trust both broadcast and print media, and 8% trust neither.

**Opinions of Public TV:** Azerbaijan will soon see the introduction of a publicly funded channel that is meant to provide objective information to Azerbaijanis about national and local sociopolitical matters. This channel is called Public TV. The survey finds that 42% of Azerbaijanis are aware of this channel, while the majority of Azerbaijanis are not aware of it. Residents of urban areas are only slightly more likely to be aware of this channel than rural residents (44% versus 38%). A majority of those with at least a fair amount of information on political developments say that they are aware of the channel, while nearly three-quarters of those with little or no information are not aware of the channel.

Among those aware of Public TV, slightly more than a third (38%) believe that this channel will provide more objective coverage of developments in Azerbaijan than existing channels, while 27% believe that it will offer the same level of objectivity. Eleven percent of those aware of public television believe that this channel will be less objective. Among focus group participants, while there is hope that public TV will actually represent public interests, many are wary that it will become another mouthpiece for the state. One reason for this opinion is because of the naming of the former director of Az-TV as the chief head of public television.

**Information About Local Developments:** When asked how informed they are about developments in their city or village, 22% of Azerbaijanis say that they have a great deal of information about local affairs while 50% say that they have a fair amount of information. Twenty-seven percent say that they have little or no information on local developments. Urban residents are more likely to cite a lack of information on local developments than rural residents (33% versus 23%).

In contrast to information about national developments (where Azerbaijanis tend to use the mass media as their primary source), they are more likely to use informal channels of information to find out about local developments. Seventy-nine percent say they use friends and families to obtain information about local developments, while 61% say they get this information in local public places such as *chaikhanas* and *bazaars*. Fifty-eight percent use national TV, and 18% report using local TV for information about local developments.

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